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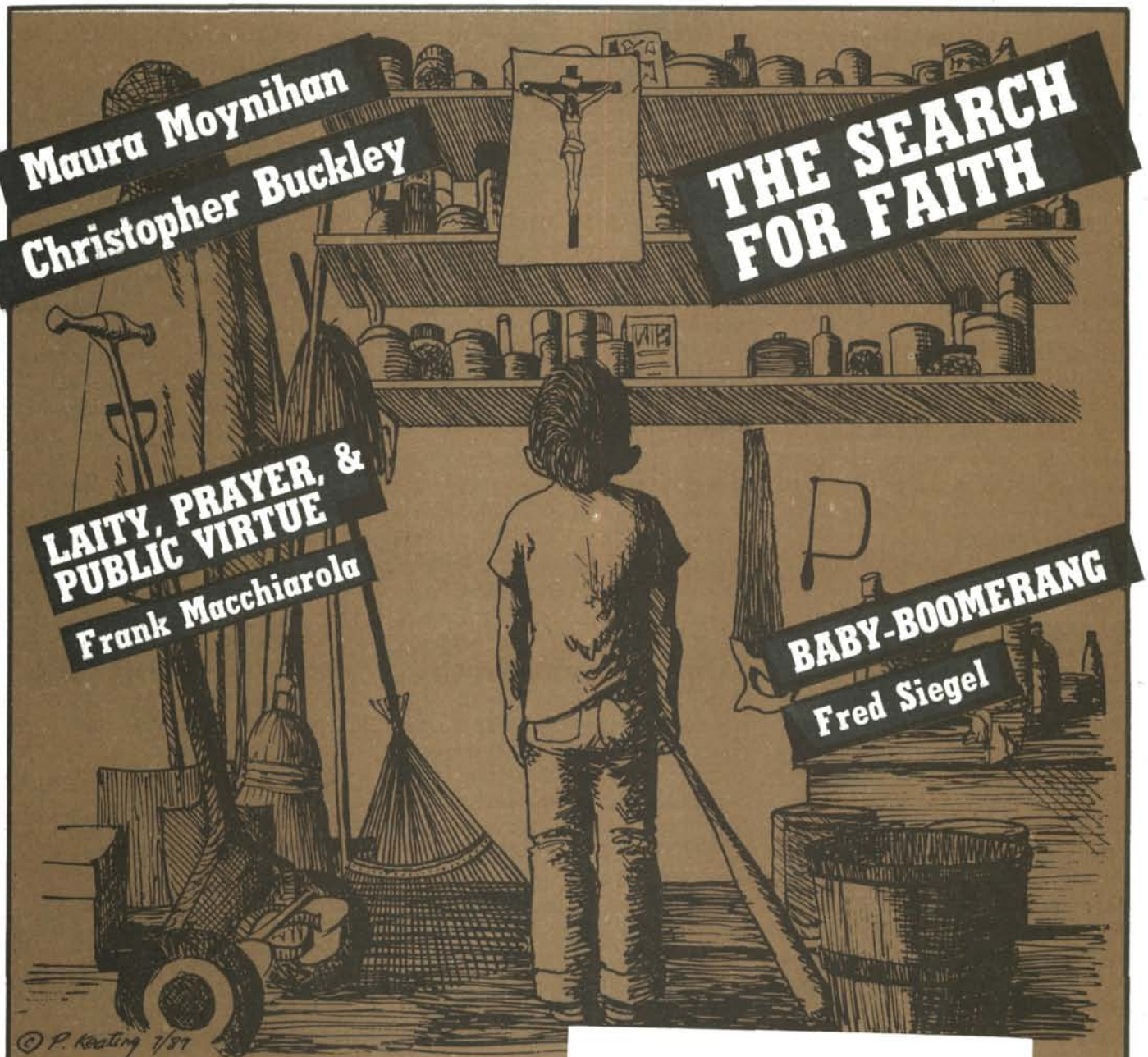
COMMONWEAL



Maura Moynihan
Christopher Buckley
THE SEARCH FOR FAITH

LAITY, PRAYER, & PUBLIC VIRTUE
Frank Macchiarola

BABY-BOOMERANG
Fred Siegel

JOHN GARVEY on Oliver North
America & the Gulf • TOM
TIMOTHY MATERER on the Futurists

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CORRESPONDENCE

Reversing course

Annandale, Va.

To the Editors: Abraham Lowenthal's voice ["Partners in Conflict," May 8] is so clearly one of reason and sanity and his prescription for U.S. policy toward Central America so persuasive and commonsensical that one could rightly ask how we ever got into such a hopeless mess. Part of the answer is being paraded before us daily in the Irangate hearings — the excess of ideology, the greed that dresses in patriotism, and an ignorance of or indifference to the real Central America, that is both monumental and racist.

If the next administration succeeds in reversing the course of the present madness, it may well be because that president's advisors back in 1987 made Dr. Lowenthal's book essential reading for the candidate. It should be so even for those few politicians who are not even thinking of running.

THOMAS E. QUIGLEY

Third world trade

Indianapolis, Ind.

To the Editors: I would like to expand some of the suggestions in Abraham F. Lowenthal's article, "Partners in Conflict" [May 8], regarding free access to the U.S. market. Lowenthal suggests easing restrictions on sugar, textiles, and small electronic appliances within the "Caribbean Basin Initiative." Such bilateral agreements are not enough. We must develop within GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and the UN Conference on Trade and Development, agreements that include an "option for the poor."

The bishops' pastoral letter on the U.S. economy includes this statement: "Moreover, equity requires, even as the fact of interdependence becomes more apparent, that the quality of interdependence be improved, in order to eliminate the scandal of the shocking inequality between the rich and the poor in a world divided ever more sharply between them."

There is a definite moral question involved when we develop a new protectionist trade policy that ignores the problems of the third world. It is also stupid. The developed nations must maintain a trade deficit with the debtor nations, or they will go bankrupt. There is certainly no way to do this that would be politically acceptable to us. We must realize that this will be painful, and the sooner we act the better. The idea that we can solve the problems of our domestic credit binge by compounding the problems of the international credit binge is ludicrous.

BOB TWITCHELL

Especially impressive

Chestnut Hill, Mass.

To the Editors: My eye was caught by the drawing of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha on the cover of the June 5 issue of *Commonweal*. As the author of a work on Kateri, both the eighteenth-century drawing and her life are wellknown to me.

Christopher Vecsey's, "Sun Dances, Corn Pollen & the Cross," is extremely well-done. It covers in-depth the views of so many experts on Native Americans and their culture, as well as the outlook of the Indians themselves. Indeed, it is mind-boggling when the number of American tribes are enumerated by historians with expertise in tribal affairs, Papagos, Pima, Yaquis, Sioux, Arapaho, Blackfeet, Choctaw, Abenakis, etc.

Especially impressive is the statement of Burton Pretty on Top, "Crows, Cheyennes, and Sioux used to fight among themselves, but we're Christians now. We're one. . . . This is our family."

Prescinding from the statement that it is not desirable that the Holy Father should beatify the Venerable Junipero Serra, O.F.M., for fear of an altercation, I agree that it seems right that Indian Catholics look to one of their own, namely Bl. Kateri Tekakwitha, rather than to the missionaries of the past.

Although Pope John Paul II will not canonize Bl. Kateri on his visit to Phoenix, may the years be not too far off before he does so.

LEONARD MAHONEY, S.J.
Boston College

Riteful ignorance

Potomac, Md.

To the Editors: I have been following the Catholic press now for sometime, and Mr. David R. Carlin's article "Religious Ignorance" [Jan. 16] rung a responsive chord in me.

Although his article treats a general religious ignorance phenomenon, I would like to mention something that strikes a little closer to home for *all* Catholics.

The Catholic church is an institution which encompasses about fifteen different Rites. However, Catholic school children are able to finish grammar school, high school, and in some instances college with almost no knowledge of these Rites. That is an absolute disgrace. I have attended Catholic schools my entire life all the way up to my doctoral degree, and am appalled by

(Continued on page 463)

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COMMONWEAL

Encore!

One of the criticisms of the Iran-*contra*spiracy hearings is that they failed to examine the "substance" of America's foreign policy choices toward Iran and Nicaragua. The criticism was often made by defenders of the administration, as though questions of circumventing constitutional and democratic controls on government action were only minor matters of procedure and not "substance" enough to occupy our attention. But the truth is that the hearings did touch repeatedly on the substance of U.S. policy and, thanks to quirks in the hearings' structure, did so in a very one-sided way.

First of all, only figures from the administration or agents of its policies gave testimony. Second, the chairmen obviously felt obliged not to restrict the witnesses' testimony even when they ranged from the issues at hand to indulge in emotional pleas on behalf of administration policy. Not once did Senator Inouye or Representative Hamilton cut short these declamations with a brusque, "Whether or not the U.S. should legally fund the *contras* is not under examination here." Such latitude was no doubt the better part of wisdom, since drawing the line between relevant and irrelevant testimony might not have been easy and would certainly have provoked charges of muzzling the witnesses. Still, the procedure gave the administration an extraordinary platform. Third, unlike the witnesses, the examining lawyers and congressmen stuck to business. No one asked General Secord what his credentials were for pronouncing on Central America. No one asked Colonel North to explain his faith in the *contra* leadership despite the negative reports he had received. No one asked for substantiation of claims that the *contras* were actually a "*democratic* resistance" or even had genuine prospects militarily. No one confronted witnesses with contradictory analyses and asked for their responses. On the contrary, congressmen frequently went out of their way to indicate agreement with the administration's policies so as to lend credibility to their own questioning of the White House's methods. No wonder that after a few weeks of this one-sided show, public support for funding the *contras*, although still far from overwhelming, increased sharply.

We are not complaining. At least not about the way the committee chose to conduct its hearings, nor even about the administration officials' determination to plead their case at every opportunity, certainly not about the American public's shift of opinion. No doubt, some American opposition to *contra* aid has been based on sheer ignorance, thoughtlessness, or native isolationism, and hearing half of the debate so relentlessly articulated sufficed to push people into the administration's camp.

Now it's time for those Americans to hear the other half.

Let the country get the full-fledged hearings on the substance of U.S. policy in Central America and toward Iran, terrorism, and hostages as well. The most

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pressing and controverted item is, of course, U.S. funding for the *contras*. The administration is asking for $105 million or more, and perhaps not for one year but two or longer. Congress could get the request any day now, and there is talk of expediting action so that a vote can be taken by October.

But a matter of this importance, following the revelations of the last few months and the public's heightened interest, calls for a thorough airing. The appropriate House and Senate committees should be gearing up. Yes, bring back George Shultz, Elliott Abrams, even Ollie North. Give them a second chance to convince Congress and the voters. But this time invite critics of the White House's policy as well. Give the microphone to everyone from former U.S. officials and Latin American scholars to representatives of church groups and human-rights organizations. Let the victims of atrocities on both sides tell their tales. Ask all of them the tough but essential questions: about the nature of the Sandinista regime and the threat it does or does not pose to the U.S.; about the *contras*, who they are and what they are really likely to accomplish; about alternative policies the United States might pursue.

In keeping with *Commonweal*'s usual summer schedule, only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue published will be dated September 11, after which regular bi-weekly publication will be resumed.

But that's not enough. Congressional hearings go on all the time. Usually, they're lucky if they merit medium-sized stories on page twelve, a few seconds on the evening news, and a bit of television exposure via C-Span. It's essential that the media give any hearings on *contra* aid something like the

Senator Hatch questions Al Capone

HATCH: I'll be honest with you, Mr. Capone, I admire the way in which you have presented your testimony at these hearings. I just have a few questions for you, on which I'd appreciate your views. First, do you feel that the Prohibition amendment was a wise choice of the American people?

CAPONE: No, Senator Hatch, I do not.

HATCH: Neither do I. And do you feel, Mr. Capone, that it constitutes a considerable intrusion into the private behavior of the American people?

CAPONE: Yes, sir, I do.

HATCH: And that was a principal concern of yours in the activities you undertook, was it not?

CAPONE: Yes, it was, as I testified.

HATCH: OK. Now, it is alleged that you undertook violent acts against certain merchants of the city of Chicago when they resisted your attempts to provide them with a means of contributing to your cause. What is your response to these allegations?

CAPONE: I reject them. Violence is abhorrent to me as a means of doing business.

HATCH: And no evidence has ever been adduced to indicate that you were associated with these violent acts, these abhorrent acts, as you describe them?

CAPONE: No evidence whatsoever, Senator Hatch. And the reason is obvious — I was not associated with them.

HATCH: OK. Now, Mr. Capone, is it your feeling that the traffic in spiritous liquors, which Mr. Ness and others have been interdicting, would have been above ground if the Prohibition amendment had not been passed?

CAPONE: Exactly. The American people could have made their own choice.

HATCH: I agree with you. And the tragic violence that has occasionally been associated with this traffic might also have been avoided?

CAPONE: Whenever you thwart the wishes of a majority of the people, you can expect a certain amount of violence, Senator.

HATCH: OK. Now, it has been suggested that these hearings have gone out of their way to impugn your motives in supplying the American people with this aid to normal living habits. What is your response to that?

CAPONE: I have tried for several days to explain my motives. I leave it to you and the members of this committee to determine whether they are legitimate.

HATCH: Speaking just for myself, Mr. Capone, I think they are. I would go further, and say I think they constitute patriotism of the highest order. And I don't think the laws of this land, or the interests of the American people, are well served when members of a congressional committee come down so hard on patriots of your stripe—er, type.

CAPONE: Thank you, Senator.

HATCH: Thank you again, Mr. Capone. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

NIEL GLIXON

Niel Glixon, formerly of Scholastic Magazine, *has written for* Dissent, Fellowship, *the* New York Times, *and other journals.*

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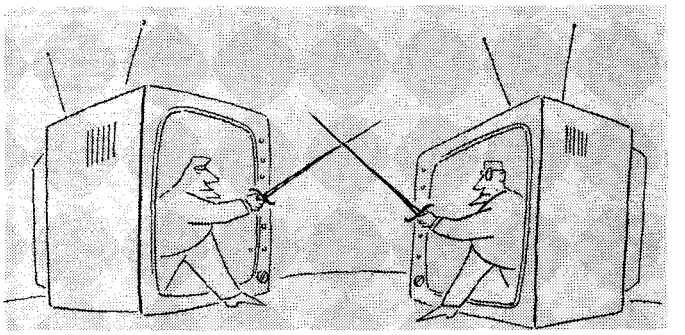
coverage given Secord, North, and Poindexter. And it's essential that Congress, policy makers, and journalists themselves hold the media's feet to the fire to make sure that this coverage is provided. The White House itself ought to cooperate fully if the president really is convinced that the people, once exposed to all the facts, will support the administration.

Frankly, we're not at all sure what the outcome of such hearings would be. We hold a brief for neither the Sandinistas nor the *contras* but think that Washington ought to be seeking an alternative to the current policy. The U.S. should assure its essential security interests through an agreement with the Sandinistas and should encourage democracy in Nicaragua by moral and material support (not, to be sure, including arms) to the democratic elements still struggling inside Nicaragua to challenge the Sandinista drive toward a monopoly of power. But after hearing out the administration and its critics, the public and the Congress might not see it that way. They might be swayed by Ollie North's rhetoric or George Shultz's Dutch-uncle sternness. Or they may feel like washing their hands of Central America altogether. The debate, no doubt, would continue. But, for the moment, policy would have been determined democratically.

A few years ago at the Oxford Student Union, Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger and E.P. Thompson debated whether there was a moral difference between U.S. and Soviet foreign policy. Weinberger argued that American policy was morally superior because it was democratically controlled. Contrasting the American belief that "you can't have a foreign



policy if the people can't control it" to the system that allows a handful of men in the Kremlin to launch an invasion of Afghanistan, the secretary of defense asked: "Who can doubt that we cannot literally do anything — we can't send a soldier anywhere, we can't spend a dime or a nickel or a shilling — that is not approved by our Congress?"

Well, some people have come to doubt it, and more today than when Secretary Weinberger spoke those brave words. But real democracy requires something more than simple congressional approval; it requires genuine congressional — and public — deliberation. That's what a thorcughgoing set of televised hearings could provide. Of course, Secretary Weinberger's argument isn't totally correct. Democratic control may be a necessary condition for a moral foreign policy but it isn't sufficient. Democracies, too, can decide to do immoral things, democratically. Nonetheless, democracy remains the least bad way of deciding things. Let's try it. For a change.

SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

PRESSING NORTH

QUESTIONS THEY DIDN'T ASK

A few days into Oliver North's testimony I realized two things: I thought he was crazy, because he had all the charm and all the erratic, completely unmoored reasoning of a couple of people I know who are genuinely nuts, steady-eyed and sincere-seeming loons who are willing to lie or make up stories or do anything else to make their lives seem more interesting to them and to the audience they wait for. I also thought that the adulation he was starting to receive was a very good argument against direct democracy. It's a damn good thing, I thought, that we elect people to go through hearings like this and debate their findings in a public forum, instead of allowing easily moved, goofily sentimental, tragically uninformed citizens a direct and unimpeded shot at making national policy.

But I have begun to question some of my early responses — not because North finally impressed me with his sincerity. His popularity is based primarily, I think, on the fact that "Ollie" rhymes with "collie" and makes people think of how nice and wet-eyed and sincere Lassie was. North's strangeness aside, what we ought to worry about is the craven response to North's sudden and stupid popularity on the part of our elected representatives, with a very few exceptions, and the laziness of the press, and perhaps the laziness or ineptitude of staffs who are supposed to keep political leaders informed. We apparently have direct democracy at its worst — a reinforced form — because those people who watch "Wheel of Fortune" and who elected Ronald Reagan are themselves watched and followed by the people who are supposed to be their leaders and political educators.

What I kept waiting for was some mention of a few facts (if they aren't facts they have yet to be refuted by North, his attorneys, or his defenders) which appeared in the February 16, 1987 issue of the *New Republic* — plenty of time, you would think, for staff members to bring them to the attention of our representatives and senators, and for members of the press to bring them to the attention of the public. I waited for someone to say, "Is it true, Lt. North, that you were

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once found naked with a .45 caliber pistol, threatening to kill yourself, and were hospitalized at Bethesda Naval Hospital for three weeks for emotional distress? Is it true that you told people your dog had been poisoned by anti-*contra* activists when, according to your neighbors, your dog really died of old age? Is it true that during the securities fraud trial of a former colleague, you lied under oath about your college record, claiming to have been a University of Rochester pre-med student when you were in fact a SUNY-Brockport English major? Is it true that you lied, during the same trial, about your military record, claiming to have served as commander of a unit the Marines don't know about, and claiming in addition to have served an apparently non-existent second term in Vietnam? And if this is true of your record, why should we or anyone else believe a word you have to say, under oath or otherwise, about anything at all?''

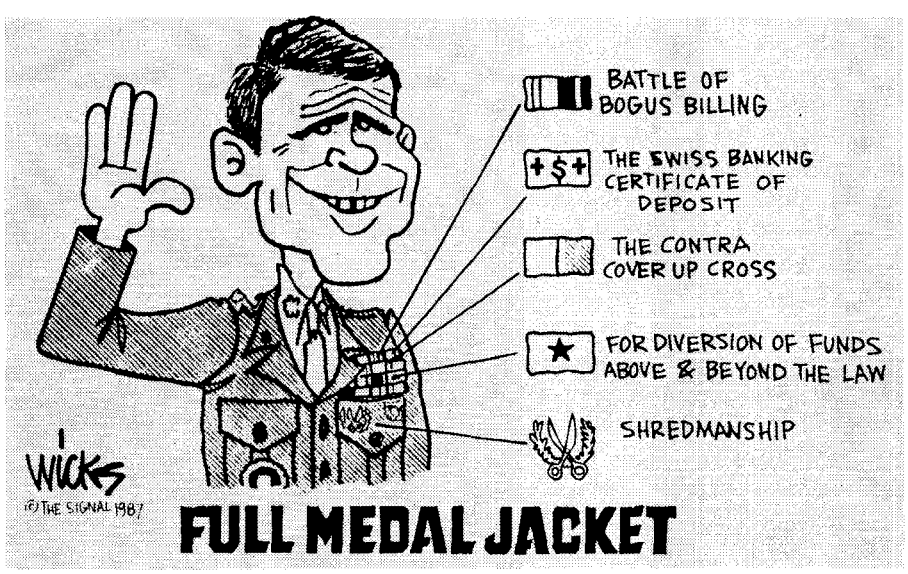
Instead of these rather obvious questions, we saw our elected representatives worrying that people who liked Ollie — ignorant as they were of the real Ollie, and beyond the fact that they were faced with something like the specter of a young Jimmy Stewart giving the finger to Congress and the Constitution — might not like *them*. Not liking them makes sense, and may explain some part of North's popularity.

The *New Republic* story was apparently based on articles and news items that had appeared in the *Miami Herald*, the *Washington Times*, *the Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. I may be unfair, and I admit that I did not listen to every minute of every network's coverage, but I feel secure in saying that none of this information, or any refutation of it, appeared during the radio or television coverage of the congressional inquiry into the Iran fiasco. North had his way with the networks. They love a pretty face and a shallow or addled mind, because the former looks good (camera) and the latter works best with an audience (low attention span, no sense of history or constitutional law).

One problem with our system of governance is that it is based on information, which necessitates getting the right kind. Another problem is that it encourages people who are in public office to worry more than they should about the lowest common denominator among their constituencies. Office holders are seldom likely to be political leaders and educators, and are more likely than ever before in history to worry about the image that can be communicated in fifteen seconds — does this guy have circles under his eyes? Is he up against someone who looks like a refugee from a shampoo commercial? Don't ask what he thinks, or whether he can.

So what happens in the case of something like the hearings — during which North either made us weep or throw up, depending on our taste — is that we do not look at the press doing the reporting or the elected folks, who at one and the same time praise Ollie's patriotism and object mildly to his demonstrated hatred of democracy, as if this were a small thing. What we do is look at Ollie North and his performance, or at the performance of his more boring superiors. Barbara Walters, who either did not know about the allegations which appeared in the *New Republic*, or didn't care, or thought they might hurt somebody's feelings, said on ABC's *Nightline* that she was inclined to trust Ollie more than she was inclined to trust Ghorbanifar, without quite saying why. She didn't need to say why she felt that way. Let me say what I suspect: Mr. G. is foreign-looking (read brown, vaguely Arab-seeming) and mercenary. Ghorbanifar is an easy target, never mind North's shakier record. Senator Hatch secreted his own separate trail of slime and added to it strange little eggs of his own, praising North and ignoring the idea that we really did not try, a couple of hundred years ago, to establish a new form of monarchy.

It is easy to pay attention to Ollie's strangeness and not spend enough time on the failures of the press (why would the press spend any time at all on that subject?) or the fact that the power of the executive branch of government, which lies behind all of this, is a result of congressional weakness and the laziness of the press, whose business it should be to inform the citizens who put those fools into office. As a result of the policies (if they can be called that) which North and his colleagues put into effect, we are now steaming into the Persian Gulf. Nicaraguans have died because of the boneheaded policies encouraged by this administration. If it weren't for that, it would be tempting to find something merely farcical in the soap opera we have been treated to. As it is, it is impossible to take the whole thing seriously, and at the same time it would be distasteful to laugh. There are Navy personnel whose lives are now at risk, because we have to restore a ''credibility'' which was lost, thanks to an unstable man who saw and believed too many war movies when he was a boy, who worked for a simple man who acted in them and also thought they were real.


BATTLE OF BOGUS BILLING
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J. Bryan Hehir

A STUDY IN CONTRAST

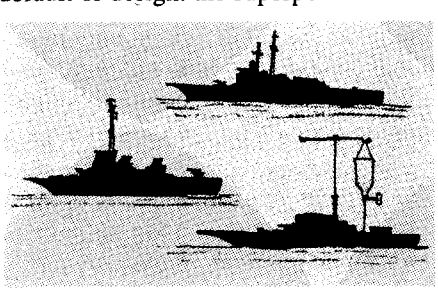
CENTRAL AMERICA & THE PERSIAN GULF

The Iran-*contra* investigation has focused attention on past policy in the Middle East and Central America. Meanwhile, the government continues to shape future policy in both areas. Certainly the two situations are dramatically different in their specifics. Yet, in both regions the United States faces the Soviet Union. That is enough for some observers to conclude that the challenge for the U.S. is similar: both policies involve a "test" of U.S.-Soviet relations in the third world.

Of course, you can't define the policy problem in either region without looking at the role and capabilities of the Soviet Union. In the Gulf, Soviet interests and capabilities are far greater than in Central America, but so is the degree of possible, although still partial, convergence between U.S. and Soviet interests. Although the threat of a Soviet "beachhead" in Central America has been repeatedly invoked during the Iran-*contra* hearings, Moscow's capabilities and commitments there are far more modest than in the Middle East. Even the Soviet-Cuban alliance, dating from the 1960s cannot compare with the historic Russian interests in the Mideast generally and the Persian Gulf specifically.

The beginning of policy wisdom, therefore, is to distinguish between these two fronts. In the Persian Gulf, the geopolitics of the U.S.-Soviet competition are clear for all to see. Neither superpower is prepared to allow its rival an undisputed influence in the Gulf or the region.

This determination by both superpowers not only to be players in the broader Mideast picture, but to be seen as players, is the first of three issues at the center of U.S.-Soviet competition in the Persian Gulf. Thanks to America's relationship with Israel and to the diplomacy of Kissinger and Carter, the U.S. has been highly visible in the region over the last twenty years. The Soviets watched their influence decline in the 1970s, but Mr. Gorbachev seems to be making a concerted effort to restore his nation's Mideast presence. The second issue is the Iran-Iraq war. Both superpowers have been supplying arms; neither desires a clearcut victory for either of the warring parties. The result, whether by default or design: the superpowers' contribution has been more evident in continuing the war than in terminating it. The third issue, of course, is freedom of navigation for non-military vessels in the Gulf.



It is this last question which Kuwait's request concerning its oil tankers has raised for both superpowers this summer. However, the U.S. debate about "reflagging" is actually only part of the larger picture. On both freedom of navigation and the Iran-Iraq war, the superpowers share some interests. This ad hoc convergence offers the possibility of limited cooperation. Is it wise to try to exclude the Soviets from the region's politics? Or should we acknowledge a legitimate Soviet role and seek some form of collaborative diplomacy? The degree of shared interest with the Soviets has never been great, but the Persian Gulf offers more possibilities for defining some degree of common persepctive than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has ever offered.

There is no comparable convergence of interests between U.S. and Soviet perspectives on Central America. The stakes for each power are very different. The U.S. does not envision a significant role in the region for any major outside power — above all, not for the Soviet Union. In the Middle East, Soviet presence is recognized and grudgingly tolerated; in Central America it will be opposed in principle. On the other hand, the USSR's capacity to project its power is less substantial in Central America than in the Mideast. In brief, both Soviet capability and U.S. policy preclude an assessment that this situation is comparable to the Persian Gulf.

The prevailing U.S. responses in the Gulf and Central America are indeed different. What they share is a common emphasis on military force. But different situations require different responses. The U.S. reflagging operation has a diplomatic parallel in the push for United Nations action, yet the reflagging too closely resembles the intervention of the Marines in Lebanon: a distant extension of military force without larger political direction. U.S. response to the Soviets in Central America seems to be principally embodied in support for the *contras*. It is a misplaced effort, showing little success and consuming Nicaraguan lives in a superpower test of wills. The *contras* have their own goals, but U.S. support for them effectively addresses neither U.S. concerns about the Soviets in Central America nor U.S. interests in the long-term evolution of Nicaragua or Central America. Direct U.S. engagement of the Soviets, superpower to superpower — about the limited interests we share in the Persian Gulf and the unacceptability of Soviet involvement in Central America — is what is now needed.

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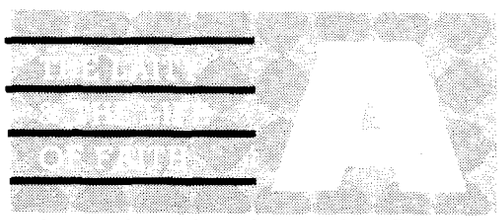
PRAYER & THE PURSUIT OF PUBLIC VIRTUE

FINDING THE COURAGE TO TAKE RISKS

FRANK MACCHIAROLA



All too often our lives are caught up in so much doing — and so little thinking about what it is that we do — that when we do reflect, it's usually because some outside force in our life brings us to a moment of truth. Modern life sweeps us along, and often our family and colleagues as well. Before long we are acting out of instinct. Our relationships become almost automatic. We take others for granted and ourselves too seriously.

I believe that the modern world encourages and supports the development of lives without reflection. People suffer a great deal because of their failure to reflect upon what has the most meaning in their lives. Having despaired of the ability to discover truth because we cannot be scientifically certain of things, we all too often abandon the search. We have, in short, missed out on much of the practical beauty of faith.

This phenomenon — of a life caught up in a rapid swirl, and the failure to search for deeper meanings of right and wrong — poses the greatest difficulty for public figures in America today. In public life we become consumed by ourselves and by the significant power that comes with an office of public trust and responsibility. We become accustomed to seeing matters of "right and wrong," and "good or evil," in personal terms. "Right" means those who agree with us, "good" is what we support. Our enemies become the "evil-doers."

The most difficult thing I have had to do as a public official in pursuit of the "public virtue," justice, has been to remind myself that enemies can be right and that their point of view might even be better than my own.

For example, on several occasions when I served as Chancellor of the New York City Public School System, I was forced to rethink positions I had taken — on issues such as confidentiality of student records, high school admissions policy, and testing — when student advocates took exception to the bureaucracy's policies and practices. I found myself having to fight the tendency to refuse to listen because I took exception to the speaker, or to the way in which the case was being pressed.

The tendency to blend the "good" with my own position, and the "right" with my own beliefs and values has been a problem I have sought to overcome. And nothing has been more antithetical to the position that I believe is correct than the political axiom that has become a standard of political action which reflects the arrogance of power: "Don't get angry, get even."

I have come to understand better the meaning of political arrogance and the real limits of political power when I have taken time away from the pace of business to think, to reflect, and to pray. Prayer has been a part of my adult life, and it has often led to a change of mind and a different course of action. This prayer frequently has been at weekday Mass, but not always. For me, prayer with others has been most meaningful as part of a dialogue in which the search for a sense of right doing has been a central part of the endeavor, where the search for an answer has shaped the effort to do the very best we could. Very often, those who have prayed with me have not even realized that I considered what we were doing to be prayer.

Frequently, as Schools Chancellor, I called upon my staff to discuss what we should do on matters affecting our

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the July 17 issue, *Commonweal* began a new series in anticipation of next October's synod on the laity. We asked a number of lay people to reflect on how their Catholic faith is lived out daily, particularly in the workplace. What ethical perameters and spiritual viewpoints do they bring to work and take home? Our second contributor is Frank Macchiarola, who is currently president of the Academy of Political Science and a professor of business at Columbia University, former Chancellor of the New York City school system and president of New York City Partnership, an organization of business, education, and community leaders.

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youngsters. Should we implement a promotional program that might hold back tens of thousands of pupils? Should we accede to a court order involving the evaluation and placement of youngsters with handicapping conditions? I needed the answers of my staff to such basic questions, and I needed those answers to be based on honest judgments about what the staff thought was right and wrong. I relied on my key staff to speak not on the basis of the bureaus which they administered; I needed them to affirm their belief in youngsters. These meetings I considered prayer. And I treated the honesty of my staff with great respect. I believe my administration of the schools had its credibility because these persons had provided it through their own integrity.

Prayer has occurred oftentimes because I needed to make many tough decisions: choosing among candidates for appointment, determining priorities of the organization, deciding what the possibilities could be, whether the setting has been reflective enough, and whether the discourse has been focused on right doing. The influence of prayer has been clear to me, and the participation of others in that search for wisdom has been partially responsible for its effectiveness.

The introduction of things prayerful into matters of public concern seems, I know, to be rather unusual for a Catholic. Discussions about prayer are usually reserved for public figures who seem to trade on the direct relationship of their views and God's. When religious issues concern Catholic public figures, it is usually because of political friction between them and the church establishment. That context is, unfortunately, a troublesome one, for it seems to put matters of conscience and faith into the swirl of public issues that are immersed in church-state conflict. Such a context ignores a more significant role for faith, in the way, for instance, that prayer shapes the process of politics. Indeed, the fullest impact of Catholic faith is really the process by which things political are considered. I mean, how we as Catholics ask questions about public issues; how we frame the discussion; at what level we enter the debate on issues like integration, nuclear weapons, abortion, racism, and sexism. Where is our focus ultimately? On the human dimension, the suffering?

The influence of prayer into what I do is basically the same for me as both a public figure and private citizen. I decided many years ago — when I became an adult — that public and private life were one, and that virtues I sought to practice would be the same for me whether I was alone, with my family, or with the larger community. I decided as well, that my faith in God had to be lived in every experience and in every way possible, and that distinctions between public and private standards were wrong for me. I can't really explain why I made these decisions or what the process was that led to them. But I have spent a great deal of my life trying to figure out what is the right thing to do, and I guess it seemed easier, and certainly better, to have one set of guiding principles that I could apply in all situations. That underlying principle is that you treat people — all people — with dignity and respect.

I have learned that spirituality knows no denominational boundaries and that the common experience shared by many of us in America today involves a faith sharing that makes the meaning of a religious community and a church far more inclusive than rules of the organization would suggest. Indeed, anyone in public life who searches for kindred spirits limited to one religious denomination is defeating his or her own purpose. I have been disappointed too often by those who define our church in terms of whom they can exclude. I have been encouraged by those who, if they cannot share the faith, share its possibilities and its potential. I believe that by fashioning an inclusive church we will evangelize in the most fitting way for twentieth-century America.

Another of my basic assumptions has been that most people are unaware of how wonderful they are or can be. The idea that people can do a great deal more than they are doing, that they can be saintly, is something that is strange to far too many people. And I believe that the failure to understand our capacity to be good is at the core of our failure to perform as successfully as we might. It is this faith in humankind that, I believe, represents my own personal contribution to others when I am operating most effectively in Christian witness. For example, this belief in perfectibility has led me to encourage individuals — students as well as my own children — to believe in themselves and in their capacity to know and to do. Often it is the only way I get them to broaden their own horizons or to accomplish what they consider the unattainable. We have too little understanding of our potential as saints.

When I was Chancellor of Schools I established a practice of taking two different students with me whenever I would go on speaking engagements or meetings out of the city. This gave me the opportunity to talk to the students, and invariably to challenge them to do more with their lives. I challenged one girl, who ranked third in her high school class, to choose a college that would stretch her intellectually, and not to settle on her initial choice. Five years later, as a Wharton School graduate, she attended a speech I gave to a group of accountants in New York City and reminded me of a trip she and another student had taken with me to Washington, D.C. Another youngster whom I met by chance in Manhattan, told me that the trip he accompanied me on — just a breakfast meeting at Gracie Mansion (residence of the mayor of New York) — gave him a greater sense of himself. He had seen that he had a place at the table with the city's "big shots." The best phone calls I have ever gotten have been on Father's Day, from youngsters who thought it was appropriate to call.

Many teachers' success with children stems from a belief in the youngsters' dignity, in their God-like qualities, and in their understanding that God expects saintly things to come from them. It is this belief in children, when acted upon in the classroom, that reflects the tangible evidence of a faith at work. Too often we are afraid to draw on this relationship and to acknowledge that our work with students is not only a job, but serious and fundamental work that is related to our own basic responsibilities as Christians.

Another assumption that I have come to operate on is that most people (and society itself) do not understand the difference between things trivial and things consequential. Our

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society regards dealings with others as trivial affairs. In highly structured corporate or political cultures it seems virtually impossible to give as much respect to the receptionist and clerk as to the vice president, chief executive officer, or chairman. And yet, I believe that such equality of respect is a necessary part of what we should be about in the process of living a good life. I believe that in many ways our social interactions should give evidence of our belief that we are one community and that God has a very real and immediate closeness to every one of us. This lesson applies strongly as well at home for family. I learned at St. Francis College, from a sociology professor who later became a good friend, of how the concept of true community goes far beyond what we see around us in the various social organizations we loosely term community. The requirement of community-building — in family life, in social life, and in our civic life — requires an infusion of personal commitment that combines a strong sense of self-worth with a strong sense of how the larger community must operate in basic harmony.

At certain times I have felt quite lonely pursuing what I thought was a basic part of the community's value system only to find out that many people were unaware of what I was talking about or what I actually meant. I tried to start a junior ROTC program in high school because I thought students should have that option. Every staff person at the meeting opposed it. They thought the military ought not to be a presence in school. I used them to be my conscience. I felt often that the education community largely refused to understand the basic entitlements of children. Caught up in the politics of the possible, the professionals of public education seemed too willing to defend the fact that the school setting frequently denied students some of their basic rights as individuals. (I brought a law suit against the board of examiners — I was on the board — and won the point that found discriminatory the test for supervisors in the public schools. Few women or minorities had ever been chosen.) Poor teaching, poor use of instructional time, low expectations, inadequate curricula, and an uncaring atmosphere were all too often defended on the basis of the needs of the system. Instead of protecting children, conventional wisdom often would have us believe that adults must be protected from children.

At the same time that we trivialize the important, we make important the trivial. In these situations we confuse the importance of a job with the importance of work. We think that leadership is only a function of those endowed with leadership roles in complex organizations. Such a respect for power is, I believe, misplaced. It promotes ambition and measures success in terms of potential rather than accomplishment. In public life we define a life of success in terms of higher office. Why not regard real success in terms of the broader view of work, and appreciate and honor those wo do well all manner of work?

It is the power of prayer, as well, that affords us courage to do things that are filled with risks. And here is where I have come to value my faith more fully. The ability to do things that I believe in — to push for a program, to advocate an unpopular cause (like integration, in a world that rewards elites) — has required the insight and strength that prayer affords. I believe that my faith in God has mattered a great deal in the quality of the work I do.

My wife, Mary, whose home I have shared for more than seventeen years, has taught me wonderful things about how faith that runs deep can be so beautiful. Our home "works" because we depend — all of us — on the presence of God there. We meet God in the things we do, in the way we do things, and in the people that God sends to share in our lives. We meet God in the challenge to do good things, in the glory of our successes, and in the lessons of our failures.

BABY-BOOMERANG

WHY THE DEMOCRATS CAN'T COUNT ON GENERATIONAL POLITICS

FRED SIEGEL

The wheel of fortune has smiled on the Democrats of late. Where once they were reduced to waiting for a severe recession in order to recapture the presidency, the victories in the '86 mid-term election lifted them out "of the morass of depression" and the Iragua affair promised to produce a presidential victory in '88. But along comes the party's premier pollster Pat Caddell, to rain on the parade. However much comfort Democrats want to take from short-term events, says Caddell, they have to realize that the long-term trends in presidential voting are running against them. Caddell's analysis of these trends and his strategy for overcoming them, are already exerting a major influence on the Democratic primary race. They deserve a close look.

Caddell's views have been laid out in a widely discussed ninety-two page memo written by Caddell for IMPAC, a group of big-money contributors to the Democratic party looking for guidance in how to place their political bets/investments.

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Driven by a debunking spirit, the memo moves point by point to try to unsettle those Democrats who believe the presidency is theirs for the asking in '88. For those comforted by the analogies between Watergate and *Contra*-gate, Caddell notes that even after the greatest scandal in American history, the Democrats barely hung on to win against the man who had pardoned Richard Nixon. For others buoyed by Democratic success in the '86 off-year elections, Caddell points out that a swing of a mere 29,000 votes would have left the Senate in Republican control. While the Democrats were the winners in an '86 election despite a precipitous drop in voter participation, the party's support among Catholics, who make up more than one-fourth of the electorate, continued to fall. In 1982 Catholic voters gave Democratic congressional candidates 63 percent of the vote; by 1986 it was down to 55 percent.

Determined to hold his party's feet to the fire, Caddell lays out the grim electoral college statistics. In the five elections since the Johnson landslide of 1964, "twenty-three states that now have 202 electoral votes have voted Republican five times straight." That solid total of 202 votes is 75 percent of the 270 needed to win. But only the District of Colombia whose 3 electoral votes are a scant 1 percent of the number needed has plunked for the Democrats five times running.

The problem, in short, is that the Democrats have no base. This is a reality which confuses "New Age" Democrats like Rick Stafford, chair of the Democratic National Committee's Lesbian/Gay Caucus, whose estimate of the party's strength is based on the power of the national interest groups it represents. Responding to Democratic Party National Chairman Paul Kirk's attempt to curb the power of interest groups on party policy, Stafford complained "I represent a lot of Democrats, as many as some state chair from Mississippi or some other state or region." True enough, but as long as presidential votes are counted locally on a state-by-state basis, how many electoral votes can he deliver?

The electoral college situation looks even worse for the Democrats when the thirteen states carried by the Republicans four times out of five are added in. Their 152 electoral votes would give the Republicans a total of thirty-six states and 354 electoral votes, a comfortable 84 votes more than is needed to win. By the same measure — states won four times out of five — the Democrats can add only Minnesota. Yet in 1972, the one year that neither Humphrey nor Mondale was on the ticket, the state went Republican.

Caddell's analysis of the popular vote is no more comforting. "In the past five elections, Democratic candidates have averaged 42 percent of the popular vote, Republicans 53 percent." Relentlessly, Caddell slices the numbers every which way to show that they always lead to the same dismal conclusions. "In the past five elections Democrats have managed to win an average of 45 percent of the vote or more in only nine states and in twenty-one states they've averaged less than 40 percent of the vote." "We must face the brutal fact," says Caddell, ". . . our problem is everywhere, with almost everyone." The example of Mondale garnering only 29 percent of the white Southern vote is often cited as an example of the Democrats' prime weakness. Yet Mondale also won only 31 percent of the whites in the industrial Midwest. The upshot is that in order to win in '88 the Democrats will have to capture two-thirds of the states that have gone Republican in four of the last five elections. A tall order even if the party were to be united behind a charismatic candidate and a compelling message.

What then is to be done?

The Democrats, Caddell insists, must concentrate on recapturing at a minimum two constituencies if the party is to have a fighting chance to win the presidency. First, geographically it's the South and not the West, he argues, perhaps with his old boss Jimmy Carter in mind, which holds the greatest near-term potential. This is a debatable proposition. The 1976 election notwithstanding, the antagonism between Yankees and Southerners is our oldest and most enduring regional rivalry; as the Northeast has swung Democratic in recent years, the South has swung Republican. In 1984 the Democrats came far closer to winning electoral votes in the West than in the South.

Second, generationally — and this is clearly the heart of Caddell's message, not only in this memo but for the last fifteen years — the Democrats have to make themselves the party of the baby boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, the single largest age group in the electorate. "Our future," intones Caddell almost reverentially, "lies in the hands, to an enormous extent, of a single generation of young Americans." His own.

Baby boomers like myself used to howl with an undisguised sense of superiority when that symbol of the "Old Politics," Archie Bunker, would intolerantly explain that only those who had "fought in the big one, DOUBLE U DOUBLE U TWO," could really understand the world. Caddell has faithfully recreated the spirit of Archie's argument, except that for him the parataxic moments are the political and cultural events of 1968 and 1972.

When it comes to evidence to show that the spirit of '68 will reappear in '88, Caddell and his journalistic supporters shift from statistical arguments to a mystical invocation of the spirits. Like the Beatles fans of the sixties, futilely searching for hidden meaning in the rock group's lyrics, the Caddellites have searched for the hidden wellspring of generational votes. They have found its portents in such unlikely places as the Caddell-inspired campaign for New Coke — described by one Caddellite, despite its failure, as "the opening shot of the 1988 election" — and the ads for Nike sneakers featuring the Beatles' ambivalent song, "Revolution." The appeal to marketing fads may, however, be unintentionally apt. Support for that premier spokesman for generationalism, Gary Hart, was so casual, that Hart, like a discarded marketing fad, has disap-

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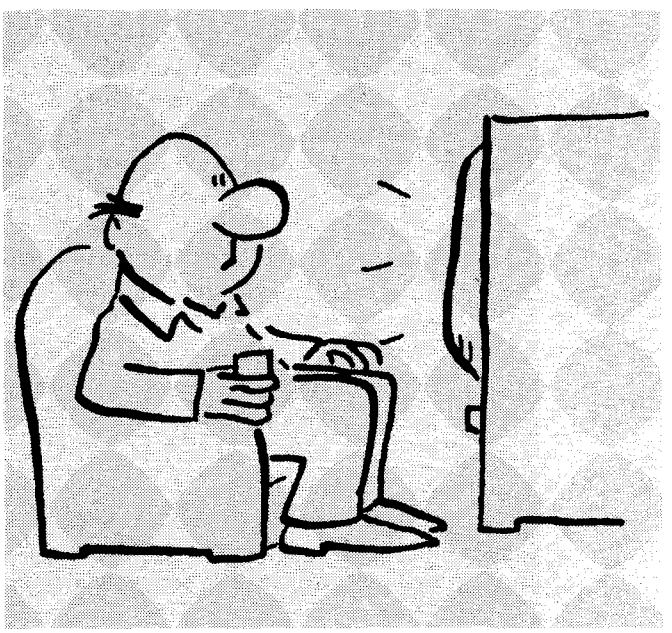
peared with barely a trace. "Ultimately," says one of the generational mystagogues, "the generation — not the consultants, not the press, not the party — made Hart. And it will make *someone else*."

Pat Caddell is hoping that *someone else* will be his personal friend, forty-four-year-old Senator Joe Biden. Biden is betting his presidential race on a renewed sense of commitment to what was best about the sixties. The Delaware Democrat believes he has heard "the heartbeat of America" and that it is aching for a new idealism in the mold of John F. Kennedy. In 1984 the Kennedyesque Gary Hart spoke of how "we acted as a generation against racial hatred . . . to stop the war in Vietnam. . . . We acted and we did overcome, but now our promise is slipping away." "The politicians of yesterday," said Hart, "are trading our future by asking our price instead of challenging our idealism." In a reprise Biden issues what he sees as a Kennedy-like challenge to his generation to meet "our moment of obligation and opportunity." "The cynics," says Biden in a well received speech, "believe my generation has forgotten. They believe that the ideals and compassion and conviction to change the world that marked our youth are now nothing but a long-faded wisp of adolescence. . . . But I'm here to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, they have misjudged us."

Mario Cuomo, not one of Biden's admirers, has among others been puzzled by the Delaware senator's continuous beating of the generational drums. Biden is reported to have used the word "generation" eleven times in one paragraph during a recent speech. The danger, says Cuomo, is that in harping on the boomers you will alienate those who came before and after.

Biden may have no choice but to harp. The substance of many of his positions, his emphasis on active government and his respect for community, run counter to what's said to define the boomers, their distrust of government and their libertarian disdain for obligations of almost any sort. Biden, remember, is also the traditionalist who might appeal to the other key element of Caddell's strategy, white Southern male defectors from the Democratic party. This Biden is the opponent of forced busing, the man who is intelligently ambivalent about abortion, who justifiably doesn't want his party to cede "value issues" like the family to the Republicans. "The Democratic party," says the Catholic Biden lamentingly, "used to be made up of people like my Grandfather Finnegan . . . but lately there has been a lot of snobbism in the party." Referring to the Carter administration's disastrous conference on the family, which was seen as supersensitive to "alternative lifestyles," Biden says, "we should have stood up and said, 'That's malarkey.'"



"In a surprise move today, a presidential candidate assassinated a crowd."

Joe Biden may believe he can transcend the contradictions of his campaign because he is the agent of something larger than himself. But in chairing the upcoming confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork, Biden may be forced to choose between constituencies. Albert Gore, on the other hand, himself both a Southerner and a baby boomer, is likely (unless more Southerners enter the race) to have a far easier time of uniting both the Southern Democratic defectors and the increasingly independent swing voters of the baby-boom generation. Gore's campaign, which flows directly out of the IMPAC memo, was encouraged and is now guided to a considerable degree by Nathan Landow, the wealthy Maryland real estate speculator, who commissioned the Caddell study in the first place.

"The truth is," says pollster Thomas Kiley, "that a lot of us who have written and talked about baby-boom politics have gotten away with murder." Caddell's memo is a case in point. Never in its many pages does he establish that there is such a thing as the baby-boom vote or, if there is, that it can be translated into electoral votes. In every election since 1972 pundits have announced that not only would the sixties generation shape the agenda as it had in '68, but that it was going to come to power through its representatives. One of McGovern's advisors, Fred Dutton, who later became a PR man for the Saudis, wrote a widely praised book *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, explaining how youth, newly enfranchised when the voting age dropped to eighteen, would sweep McGovern to victory. Many of those youth were supporters of George Wallace in the Democratic primaries and Richard Nixon in the general election. But even among McGovern supporters, by the late seventies the river of generational sentiment arrived at its delta, splitting into numerous rivulets separated by race, region, religion, occupation, and income.

Today, boomers are divided between those born before 1954, who are on the whole distinctive in their criticism of American institutions, and those born after '54, who are more

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like the rest of the population. The older boomers are far more critical of the military, far more supportive of abortion than other age groups. They are still tinged with the apocalyptic sentiments of the sixties. Responding to pollsters, they are far more likely to agree, "Yes, it is unfair to bring a child into the world." But even if Biden could appeal to this half-generation, there are still sharp differences. Older male boomers were far more supportive of Reagan than the college-educated single women who distinguished themselves by voting against Reagan in unusual proportions.

There are 76 million Americans who were born between 1946 and 1964, more than half of the voting age population. But the boomers are far less likely to vote than their parents, and of those who turn out there is little evidence that they vote very differently in the general elections. In 1986, for instance, there was virtually no difference between how the boomers voted for Congress and the way the rest of the country voted. Michael X. Delli Carpini, the author of the most extensive study of baby-boomer political behavior, has concluded that their voting patterns "have become increasingly similar to those of the rest of the population." Not surprisingly, well-to-do boomers tend to vote far more like their affluent elders than the semi-skilled laborers of their population cohort.

Why, then, all the attention? Some have suggested that the press is fascinated with Yuppie boomers because most of the people doing the stories on generational politics are in effect writing about themselves. There is little doubt that the media has been fascinated with that percentage of the baby boomers, variously estimated at between 2.5 and 5 percent of their age group who live the life of up-scale consumers to the hilt. And therein may lie part of the answer. Generationalism has been, in considerable part, a marketing phenomenon. As the demographic bulge, the so-called pig in the python, has moved through different stages of life, it has always created an enormous demand for the entire generation's needs of the particular moment — from the creation of new schools in the fifties to the creation of day-care facilities today. As political marketing and product marketing have become increasingly intertwined, advertisers selling to the boomer market are likely to have a distorted sense of the importance of Yuppies, mistakenly seen to typify the boomers, but whose purchasing power, in fact, far exceeds their weight in the population or at the polling place. The Yuppie, whatever his or her discretionary income and importance for campaign contributions, can still dispose of no more votes than the "left-behind" unemployed factory worker.

As the boomers continue to move through the life cycle, their sheer bulk will continue to send shock waves through every institution they enter. But even so, the boomers are unlikely to have a profound effect on the electoral college, which is where presidential elections are won and lost. The prophets of generational salvation are, to paraphrase the historian Lewis Namier, people who have imagined the past and remembered the future.

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"The Catholic Bishops' War and Peace" **Francis X. Winters,** professor, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University
"A Comparison of Catholic and Liberal Understanding of Social Justice" **Andrew Lustig,** professor of philosophy, University of Lowell

12:00 NOON-2 P.M.—Lunch—Campus Cafeteria

2:00-5:00 P.M. — Ward Circle Auditorium
Contraception, Abortion, and Reproduction
Chairman: **Vern Bullough,** dean of natural and social sciences, State University of New York at Buffalo
"Maternal Consent and Ensoulment" **Marjorie Maguire,** Author
"Contraceptive and Reproductive Freedom" **Robert Francoeur,** professor of human sexuality, Fairleigh Dickinson University
"Fathering and Fatherhood: A Perspective of Catholic Ethics" **Merle Longwood,** professor of religion, Siena College

5:00-7:30 P.M.—Dinner—Terrace Dining Room

7:30-10:00 P.M.—Ward Circle Auditorium

Free Inquiry and Papal Authority
Chairman, **Gerald Larue,** professor emeritus of archaeology and biblical history, University of Southern California at Los Angeles
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OUT OF INDIA: KARMA & CHRIST

A PILGRIM MAKES THE EFFORT TO COME BACK

MAURA MOYNIHAN

"Growing up Catholic" has become an established genre, an exercise sometimes in anger, often in bittersweet nostalgia. Even when it is not trivializing or overtaken by the jocularity that sophisticated Americans appear compelled to adopt as the price of describing religious feelings in polite company, such reflections frequently resemble insects trapped in amber — exotic, lovely, or bizarre, but above all the lifeless relics of a bygone time. The spiritual dramas and questions that were once so intense seem never to have outlasted puberty; they have little connection with a continuing quest for religious understanding and personal direction.

The following accounts, by Maura Moynihan and Christopher Buckley, are happy exceptions. Moynihan and Buckley, however, would certainly not claim their stories as models — they have sought and found faith in strikingly different ways and different places — nor would the editors foist that role on them either. Their stories are typical only in their individuality. They are reminders, in effect, that "growing up Catholic" isn't what it used to be. No doubt the search for an adult faith always took more circuitous paths and achieved more varied forms than books of Catholic theology and spirituality let on. Unusual spiritual journeys, it often seemed, were reserved for "converts." Yet since Vatican II, awareness has been growing that we are all converts.

These accounts are based on interviews, conducted and edited by Peter Occhiogrosso. They will appear with the stories of two dozen other current or former Catholics in Mr. Occhiogrosso's *Once a Catholic*, to be published in September by Houghton Mifflin.

THE EDITORS

Faith is without any question the most important thing in my life — having a personal relationship with God. In this society, people laugh at you for saying that. You're considered a nut if you say you believe in God, a little off. I find that very frightening. When I had a rock 'n' roll band, I used to try to talk about mysticism and religion. I wrote songs about it and people laughed, so I stopped and went back to teenage angst.

My earliest years were spent in upstate New York, but I don't remember them at all. Then my family moved to Washington, D.C., when I was in kindergarten and my father was working for John F. Kennedy as assistant secretary of labor. I had an extremely happy childhood, and I feel very blessed. During those years in Washington, my family and I were more involved in the church as a family than we were ever to be again — which makes me very sad. We made our First Communions, my brother was confirmed. My father used to take me to St. Thomas's Church in Washington, and I was awed by the size and scale of it. I suppose religious buildings are supposed to inspire awe and reverence, and they do — it works.

I was very attracted to all the stories about Mary, the Virgin Mother. I'm named for Mary: my name Maura is the Gaelic for Mary. You're named for saints — or, in India, for gods — because that particular saint — or god — will protect you. So I feel that I have the protection of the Virgin Mother, and I feel grateful for that.

There is a certain distinct personality type that is definitely Catholic and that is defined by a certain energy. They like to flaunt their neuroses. That doesn't mean we hang out together. In fact, my closest friends when I was growing up were all Jewish. I was always a little bit envious of them because they had better festivals and holidays. Then I went to India and became exceedingly jealous of my Hindu friends. Their rituals seemed more participatory than the Christian ones, but I've

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since come round and changed my mind. I go to synagogues, too, and I think you can't really understand Christianity unless you know something about Judaism.

Catholics are also perennially childlike in some ways. I don't know why that is, but all the Catholics I know have that sense of wonder and awe in them. There is something very mystical and strange in the Catholic ritual, in the liturgy, that's missing in the Protestant and that, I think, always fills you with awe of the unknown. Catholics also tend to be more superstitious, and they're always trying to blame something on someone else or on some external force. I assume that derives from confession, from trying to exonerate yourself with the words and the incantation.

My first spiritual experience took place at St. Thomas's in Washington with my dad. I was listening to the music, the censer was swinging, and suddenly the whole altar seemed to glow, to acquire an aura that had not been there previously. I was in first grade, but I remember this moment quite vividly. I used to be afraid of church a little because it was so large and almost forbidding. No one really explains the rituals to you very well. I find the image of Jesus on the cross absolutely terrifying, and I think it's quite wrong that there's been such an emphasis on that in the two thousand years of Christianity — or since whenever it was that the emphasis shifted from the Resurrection to the Crucifixion. That's all wrong. It terrified me as a child, and it still frightens me when I go into a church and I see Christ's agony.

The real miracle of Christ is the Resurrection. But I remember as a child being frightened of the crucifix and not understanding the Crucifixion at all. I feel the same way about the language in a lot of the hymns: He who suffered for us, the Lamb who left his blood. And what about taking Communion, the Body of Christ and the Blood of Christ? It seemed to me that the Crucifixion was like a human sacrifice — and of the most hideous kind if he was the Son of God and a man of peace. But now I try to think more of the Resurrection because I don't like that emphasis on our sin, I don't like that emphasis on evil, I don't like that emphasis on torture and murder.

There's so much superstition in Catholicism. I'd ask in Sunday school, "But *why* was he crucified?" "*Because* of your sins! Shut up!" You're a child, you don't know. But to compensate for that socially, the largest Christian festival in the United States is Christmas — not Easter, not Good Friday, not Pentecost. It's Christmas, the *birth* of Christ. When I was a child I loved Christmas so much. It was the most important part of the year, a unifying experience for my family, for the community, for society, for the world. In India there are large festivals on the scale of Christmas five or six times a year. But you don't have that in Christianity anymore; it's lost. The only real festival we still practice is Christmas, and it has all the elements of a festival: the spiritual message, the merchandising aspect of it, everything.

People say that without the Crucifixion you couldn't have had the Resurrection, but I don't know about that. The Buddha wasn't crucified. The Buddha died in his sleep and *then* the Nirvana came. Mary wasn't crucified; she ascended body and soul to heaven. I don't accept that about the Crucifixion. I think it probably was a terrible tragedy and that he was terrified. Besides, there's more truth in what the artist portrays than in what the theologian will tell you. Look at the face of Christ on the cross: the horror. That's not a very comforting notion, nor is it what he meant when he was teaching and spreading his message of love.

My mother's parents were divorced, and the nuns used to tell her stories about children of divorced parents and how their feet and hands would turn into animals' hooves. Isn't that horribly irresponsible? It's terribly frightening for a child when she's eight years old. In Catholic education, you are instilled from the very beginning with all kinds of phantasms of fear. It's like Zoroastrianism and the duality in those early years, in the sense that they're trying to instill in you a reverence for God and a terror of the devil. But it wasn't the devil who was a prominent player in my early childhood fantasies and myths so much as *myself* and the evil in me — being tainted and being sinful and going to hell.

Something about Catholicism and its emphasis on ritual, which inspired the Reformation and God knows what else, does sort of lead one to think it's a system and you can buck it — that if you just go in and say so many Hail Marys you'll be cleansed. So it was as a child in Sunday school that I first began to question Catholicism. My Sunday school teacher was a very sweet and lovely lady who told us some lovely biblical stories, although not enough. In fact, I wish we'd had more stories and less practice of genuflection. Instead she would tell us, "Now go into the confessional and say, 'I lied ten times, I stole five times, and I was mean to my brother six times.' " So every single one of us went in and repeated exactly what she said. There wasn't enough emphasis on really examining your conscience and really taking responsibility for confessing and then persevering and resolving not to sin again. Something seemed false about that, and it made me doubt the efficacy of prayer and ritual when I was very young.

I think that what's lacking in Christian education today is an emphasis on myth and mysticism and understanding Christianity through the arts, because that's how religion comes alive. Then it's not something threatening, then it's not just a moral dictum. That's why I was very strongly attracted to Hinduism when I first got to India. In India, religion is an integral part of your life — to the extent that there's no secular art to speak of. Well, now there is with films, which are a Western technology imported to the third world. But all the plays and songs and art and music of India are extolling the great achievements and powers of the many, many, many, many gods. That's how I've come to reach Christianity again, through music and visual arts.

Yet in my early Sunday school education and my education in general, there wasn't enough emphasis on trying to conform as closely as possible to Christ's teachings and his message of love and forgiveness. There was more justifying and explaining the Crucifixion. I think that's misplacing much of our faith

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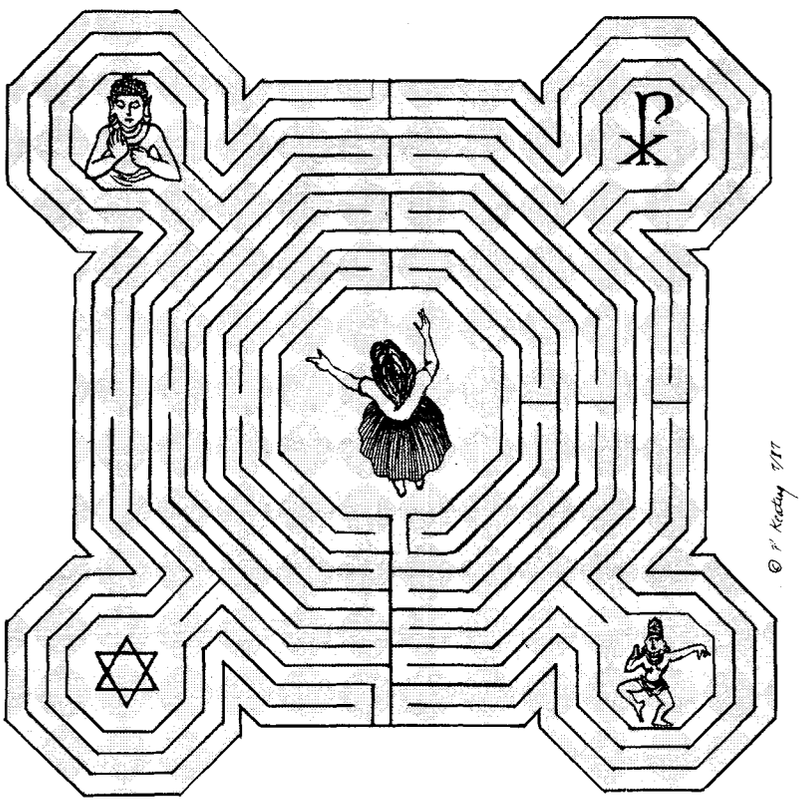
and our focus. That's my problem with Catholicism and Christianity, so I've tried to come back to it in my own way. And I have, through Indian religion, come to a new acceptance and understanding of Christianity. I was born a Christian and that's very important. I wasn't born a Hindu in this life, although I do believe in reincarnation. I know, for instance, that the doctrine of reincarnation was described in the early Christian Scriptures and that it was removed at the Council of Nicaea.

I went to public school from the first to the fourth grade, then I went to private school from the fourth grade to the beginning of tenth, following which I attended the American International School in New Delhi for high school. I moved to India when I was fifteen, when my dad was appointed ambassador there. My father goes to church all the time. I remember going to church with him as a child and feeling very proud and excited. But we were the only two members of the family who ended up going. My mother had a terrible reaction against religion and Catholicism. She went to parochial schools her whole life, and she has terrible stories about it.



This is a funny story — I don't know what she'll think but I'll tell it anyway because it's very revealing about Catholic childhood. I was playing with my little brother in the bathtub one day. I was in kindergarten or first grade, and we had just been preparing for First Holy Communion. So I said, "John, don't you know that gasoline is a car's host?" I thought cars ate gasoline, just like we ate the host at Communion. Mom heard that and, perhaps reflexively after years of getting her knuckles whacked in parochial school, she came in like a torrent, pulled me out of the tub, and shoved a bar of soap in my mouth. It was like a Dickens novel or something. I was kind of confused and didn't know what I'd done wrong, because to me it seemed perfectly sensible.

They never considered sending us to parochial school, I think because of my mother's bad experience with the nuns. A lot of my friends went to parochial school, though, and there were always nuns coming to visit the family because we were actively involved with the church. I was very sorry that I wasn't confirmed — we were moving a lot at that time and my parents never got around to it. And I think that sense of community and cultural identity that comes with belonging to the church started slipping away as my parents no longer enforced any kind of religious discipline on the family. That started to slip away, and with it went my whole sense of who I was. I think religion is important not just for spiritual or ethical structure, but also for a sense of your cultural identity. I always envy my Indian friends so much because they know exactly who they are and where they come from and how they fit into the larger historical tradition. We don't in America — we've lost so much of that. All the distinctions are blurred and our individuality and our sense of belonging to a tradition are gone.

I regret that. And if I ever have children I don't know how I'll bring them up, because I really am a pantheist/universalist. I go to church, but I also go to the Hindu temple — to me there's no conflict at all. I'll go to a synagogue and a mosque, and I'll have the same intensity of spiritual communion in any holy place. I felt that way at Stonehenge. I also felt that way when I was in Greece and I went to Delphi. In fact, at Delphi I had one of the most powerful mystical experiences of my life.

As I said, I moved to India when I was fifteen, and I fell in love with India the moment I stepped off the plane. It just felt to me like home. People are seldom indifferent to India — either they love it or they can't stand it. I loved it instantly. The first thing one learns about Indian philosophy, which one hears from speaking to the pundits, is that all things are divine, all things have *jiva*, which means soul. You do really feel that you're in an integral universe there, that everything has its purpose and its place and is working as part of a larger scheme. The whole notion of time and space is so vast and so grand in India. I majored in Hindu studies at college because I love reading the texts and the mythology.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition in the West, what are erroneously called the pagan myths or fairy tales have been disavowed as being part of a religious tradition by the church, and a schism has grown up between the two. That shouldn't be at all, and in Hinduism they're not at variance with one

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another. They're integral parts of the same cultural religious tradition, and they can coexist and cross-pollinate. "Truth is many, God is one," is one Hindu axiom I love. No, "Paths are many, truth is one." I'm sorry.

Hinduism is very tolerant. It acknowledges the legitimacy of every religious experience and every religious leader. Through my Hindu studies, I started understanding Jesus again. If you ask the holy men about Jesus they'll say, "Yes, he is also an avatar." So I began to think of Jesus as an avatar. But I have a lot of trouble with Catholics who told me that he's the one God, the only God, the only Way. I don't believe that still, though I do consider myself a good Christian. I believe very much in Jesus' message, and I don't think Jesus would like their attitude. I think he'd be very upset that his message has been distorted and that crimes have been committed in his name.

I became strongly attracted to Shiva. He's the God of destruction and he's very strange, the God of the Saddhus — he's blue and has a snake around his neck. And then I had an extraordinary mystical experience in Vrindavan, where Krishna was born. I have always thought that Krishna and Christ shared many attributes and qualities. The Krishna myth has elements of Moses and of the Christ myth and of certain Greek and Roman myths, too. Krishna was born in a palace, smuggled out at night on a bed of reeds, and floated down the river, like Moses. He was a carpenter, a cowherd, and led a simple life among simple people, like Christ. And, like Christ, his message is very much for the poor: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. You find that over and over again in the doctrine of bhakti, which is the notion of reaching God through love only, not through exact performance of ritual or understanding of doctrine — because that keeps religion in the hands of the educated classes and away from the poor man. That's a problem particularly in India, with its caste system.

So Krishna came along, and he was a radical and a revolutionary very much like Jesus. He performed miracles, but much more than Jesus did — Jesus was very modest about it, Krishna wasn't. But I don't know if Krishna was a god or a man. I think he was probably a myth. I don't know if Krishna lived, but I think there's evidence that Christ really took human incarnation. It doesn't matter in India, no one cares. There's no real Indian history. There are hundreds and hundreds of years, after the Greeks left and before the Moguls and the British came, when no one kept any records. The reason it doesn't matter in India is that the divine and the actual get mixed up.

But in India my faith and my involvement in religion were reawakened, and I guess that says something for what's lacking in our Christian education or upbringing here in the West. I studied Hinduism in school and I loved it because it's so colorful and exciting. I was attracted by the sensual, physical qualities of the worship — the brilliantly colored temples, the vast mythology with many, many gods, and the sound and smells and richness of it. It's what I would call the spiritualization of the physical. Contrast that with the irony and, some

I have lived in India for nearly six years now and I am no closer to understanding poverty than I was the day I arrived. Perhaps I am further away. Then at least, I was full of innocence and rage, grieved by everything I saw, moved to impossible gestures. Now, a bit jaded, a lot numb, and more and more caught up in my life and its complications, I notice less. . . .

I am slowly coming to an understanding of what Jesus meant when he said, "The poor you will always have with you." I used to understand the word "always" in a linear sense — that through all the ages there would be poor people. That linear view is certainly true, but within each age is another "always": the poor, once you let them into your life, are *always* there; every time you turn around, a hand is outstretched. There is no moment free of them; there is nowhere to hide. This is quite literally true. The more you give, the more you will be asked.

— Jo McGowan
"The Poor Break Through"
Commonweal, June 19, 1987

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would say, even the hypocrisy of the Catholic upbringing which on the one hand is so sensual and on the other teaches you to deny and fear and reject the flesh and the physical world. That always made me very uncomfortable, and that's something which Catholics always struggle with. Catholics have a very difficult time with sex, although it's something of a paradox. They're afraid of it, and yet they're passionate.

What's wonderful about Hinduism is that there are so many different belief systems that contradict one another — there are many different sects you can follow — yet all are part of the Hindu religion, and they're all perfectly acceptable. You can choose the path that's suitable for *you*. There aren't the terrible conflicts between different sects and schools of thought that exist elsewhere. But I was first attracted to the sight, the sound, the smell of it, which is a very important part of religion. Like the incense and the lilies in the church, all that's very important — the outward forms of ritual and symbol and practice.

My parents' generation was different. For them, the answers were much clearer. World War II had a tremendous impact on their values and beliefs and their faith in the age-old struggle of good and evil. That was a war in which it was very clear that there was Good and there was Evil. It wasn't that way for us, as you know. We don't know what we are. In the sixties the social revolutionaries were defying everything that was established, and that meant the church, too. But that was a great loss. My father taught at Harvard, so I was hanging around the Harvard campus all through the sixties rebellions. David Stockman was my live-in babysitter, so it's all my fault in a way: I tortured him so much that he turned into that weirdo who destroyed the economy!

All my father's closest friends were Jewish — Norman Podhoretz, Nathan Glazer, Irving Kristol — so I was surrounded by all those rabbis, those brilliant Jewish intellectuals. I was always going to Hillel House with my friends — they'd have Hanukkah parties and Passover dinners and I'd always tag along. That was a lot of fun. We Catholics on the block never had anything like Hillel House. I do think that the church didn't reach out and grab us enough. *I* made an effort to come back to it; it hasn't come after *me*. Most people desperately need some kind of spiritual guidance — not just spiritual, but also a sense of cultural identity, which a lot of American Catholics are losing. That's one reason I became a passionate Hindu for many years.

Then in the temple in Vrindavan, where Krishna was born, I had the experience similar to the one I had had in Washington, only more intense. I went in really just as a student with my notebook and my sunglasses and left my sandals outside. And suddenly I just began to tremble all over, and I felt this . . . I can't describe what it was but it's sometimes known as the kundalini awakening. It was an experience of kundalini rising, and I felt an extraordinary communion with all the animating and divine power of the universe. And I fainted. I stayed in Vrindavan for two weeks, just walking around in a daze. It was a moment of absolute communion with God. Then I came down very fast, which can happen with kundalini. But I became a fervent devotee of Krishna — though I'm not a Hare Krishna at all, which is a different sect. Then I began to meditate and visualize Krishna and use the Krishna mantra.

When I went to temples, I felt a tremendous sense of security in that I belonged to something and a feeling that God was very close and accessible — something that I had not felt in the church in a very long time. I can't explain why. You can never explain faith. And then I had another mystical experience in Delphi, in which I saw . . . well, you can't describe these experiences, so I'll just leave it at that. I had another in Jerusalem at the Dome of the Rock and the Wailing Wall and then at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. I felt frightened and confused, though, to think that these three great monotheistic traditions had warred with each other so much over the centuries. No one in the church has ever explained that to me. In Jerusalem I met, at the age of nineteen, a man from the Greek Orthodox church who took me around the Old City. For the first time in my life, I saw someone with a halo, which is the aura — I saw it around him.

I took a year off from college and went back to India, and I lived the life of a true pilgrim. I had very few possessions, and I walked many places visiting holy sites. I lived in an ashram for a very long time. I always wore a sari over my head, and beads. That was a strange and beautiful time, now that I think of it. I spent many hours a day meditating and praying. I was also unhappy at that time, longing for some answer to all my deepest prayers. I hope this doesn't sound silly — I think when you describe your own spiritual journey it sounds silly to people.

I had come to accept, from meeting those holy men and reading the vast literature of Hindu and Buddhist canons, a belief in reincarnation and the idea of karma. What we have in America is a lot of karma, but not dharma. Dharma is the corollary principle: it is the law that you must obey. If you are a Hindu, you are born with your dharma — we can be anything. We can be a street sweeper or the president, it doesn't matter. So I was searching for my dharma.

At that time in my life I was very unhappy and I sought refuge and solace in temples and churches, really out of desperation — in much the same way that you'll see a bag man passed out in front of St. Patrick's. I felt almost like that. Still, if you go to the church out of desperation, it does not desert you then. I was very poor at this time, I had no money and was all on my own. I was sort of working my way around Paris at odd jobs. I sang at sidewalk cafés, making forty-five dollars a night passing the hat, doing street theater, and living hand to mouth.

One day I went to Notre Dame and had another overwhelming feeling of faith. I burst into tears and felt a reawakening of faith that had not happened to me for a very long time. I used to go to church to feel close to God but didn't feel that *personal* ecstasy that I felt at Hindu temples. But this day I decided that it was my dharma to be a Catholic — after all, why was I *born*

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a Catholic? But I decided that I was not going to reject Hinduism, I was just going to incorporate what I'd learned. To me, Hinduism still had a lot of answers that I wasn't getting from Christianity, from a priest, from Catholic friends, or from going to Mass on Sunday.

I went back to the United States and started going to church again — but combining it with my visits to the Hindu temple, which I still do. I don't have any problem reconciling that and believing in both. They both satisfy different needs for me. I still find Christianity stranger and more elusive than I find Hinduism. I find the Catholic ritual and liturgy more peculiar and almost more *supernatural* than the Hindu, which seems much more down to earth. It's back to the Crucifixion, and the sacrifice of God's only Son, and the drinking of His blood — that just seems strange and supernatural. Hinduism is also much more physical: the priest will *fling* holy water at the faithful, and they'll *scream*. It's more like a Baptist church — more hysterical, in a way, more ecstatic.

I think that my going away from the church for those years and immersing myself in an entirely different tradition has made me come back to it with entirely fresh eyes. I'm not just going through the rote motions because I learned them as a child. I came to it entirely of my own volition and my own longing, without any kind of judgment — considering myself a Hindu, not thinking of myself as a Catholic — and have rediscovered how wonderful the Catholic service is and how much it is trying to instill love, forgiveness, and brotherhood. I know it sounds corny and prosaic to say things like that, but good God, that's what the human race needs, isn't it? Still, I think that the church isn't doing enough to bring back young people who have lapsed.

I would like to reinvolve people in faith because it means so much to me, especially in the nuclear era. If I didn't have faith, I don't think I would be able to get up in the morning, I don't think I'd be able to live. I went through a period a few years ago when my faith was very badly shaken, right after Ronald Reagan was reelected and we embarked on a massive rearmament program while funds for everything else were being cut. It was terrible to read the paper in the morning, and I couldn't even get out of bed sometimes, I was so scared. It is only through almost militantly reasserting my faith that I feel I can keep on living and that nuclear war can be stopped — if enough people turn to God and discipline themselves ethically and spiritually. Nuclear war is just a symptom, isn't it? But in the history of the human race as we know it, we've never faced anything like it before now.

The church, through the bishops' conference, has been very responsible about that, and I'm glad. I don't think anyone can challenge the moral authority of the church on that issue. It's not just like a citizens' action group — politicians can't turn away from it. I've worked with the nuclear freeze, but I plan to get more deeply involved with the disarmament movements that are tied to the church because they have the most persuasive arguments. I'm also interested in the sanctuary movement and the church's role in Central America. I think the church could be even more active on issues of disarmament and of military intervention and war — then again, look at the Crusades! But I think you can forgive mistakes that have been made along the way.

It seems to me that during the Inquisition, for instance, the church must have been invaded by some demonic force. I believe in the duality of good and evil — that's what I liked about my early Catholic instruction, the idea of two combating principles. Zoroastrianism describes them very well: Asha and Druj represent two angels inside the soul who compete for the individual throughout his life. I think there's much duality in Christianity. The iconography of the devil has not been very well developed; otherwise we wouldn't have the same kind of fear and anxiety about sin that we do. In Hinduism, the notion of evil and the devil is much more sophisticated and more visible, in the form of the goddess Kali. You worship her and pay homage to that principle of destruction and violence. They don't call it evil — it doesn't have that moral connotation to it. But you recognize it and ask it to protect you. That doesn't exist in Christianity, and it's another thing that attracted me to Hinduism. It was dealt with in a healthier way. The devil has more power over you if you are afraid of him — you attract him through fear. There's less fear in the Hindu psyche. Kali is depicted as being black, like the devil; she wears a necklace of human skulls; she wears a skirt of human arms; she spouts blood. So you can see why the Victorian ladies were a little confused when they first arrived on the subcontinent.

How do my parents feel about my Hinduism? I haven't talked to them about it too much. I think they were a bit bemused by my attraction to Hinduism, frankly, in the early years. They were very confused by it. They didn't take to it immediately and instinctively, like I did. I don't think they know the extent to which I'm involved in my meditation and my personal practice, because I keep it fairly private. I've been a vegetarian since I was a child, they know that. But many of my odysseys in India were solitary, not with them. I think they're glad that I'm involved with the church again, but I don't think they care one way or the other.

It's not a big deal in India. You can talk about your guru and your meditation and your mysticism at any cocktail party and it's not considered to be offbeat or nutty. Whereas here, as I said before, if you say that you believe in God, people think you're a little off, and they're suspicious of you. But certainly my parents have seen the change in me since I made a greater commitment to faith — how much happier I am and how much more responsible I am. I do believe that you get divine guidance. I believe in the old axiom that if you take one step toward God, he takes ten steps toward you. Christ is a very good exemplar and model for that. But I don't know what Christ would feel about the divisions in his church. I wonder what he thinks. I feel very strongly, for example, that there should be more unity between Christians and Jews. I go to synagogues, which my parents always encouraged a lot. My father goes to synagogues, too, and he's been a great champion of Israel. And yet he's a good Catholic. So there's always been a great

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involvement with Jewish culture in my family, and I feel very privileged to have had that when I was growing up. It shaped my values a great deal. I think there should be more of an effort on the part of Catholic and Jewish leaders to emphasize what is common to both traditions and to create a greater unity. Judaism is fascinating — the language and music — and to think that Christianity is part of that makes Christianity seem a richer and more varied tradition than it sometimes appears. God knows, it can often seem stodgy and boring. Go to a Hasidic synagogue in Brooklyn and, my God! There should be more joy in the Catholic service.

Going to Italy also had a hand in making me rediscover Christianity and enjoy it more and find more pleasure in it. Ritual should be pleasurable, it should be aesthetic. The Catholic church in Italy, God knows, is spectacular — the color and the light. Again, as in a Hindu temple, it's the spiritualization of the physical, which you see in the Buddhist and Hindu traditions and which often seems to be lacking in contemporary Catholicism and Christianity. Also, I never learned much about the saints and always wanted to. They're like all the Greco-Roman gods. One thing the church should do is to revive the folklore and mythology. Italy is like India with its spiritual topography, because you have the place where a miracle occurred and then the home of a saint. In every temple in India the priest will come up and tell you that it's the holiest place in all of India.

What is it we're missing in America? Maybe it's because we're a nation of immigrants and we don't have roots that go down too far — we're transplanted. In India and in Jerusalem and in Italy you feel a deep connection to the source. It was in France and Jerusalem that I had my reawakening, and when I went to Assisi it just all came to life.

GROWING UP CATHOLIC & THE ADULT SEARCH FOR FAITH

NOT A SYLLOGISM BUT A POEM

FROM ACID ON GOOD FRIDAY TO 'ORTHODOXY'

CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

My first memory, my first consciousness of God occurred in the semi-abandoned garage attached to my parents' house. It was the gardener's shed and it was full of must, dust, and broken-down things. I'm not sure if I was yet fully verbal, so I may have been younger than four years old. I looked up and saw tacked to the edge of a shelf a rendition of the Crucifixion which had been put there by our Cuban gardener. It was, I think, a pen and ink drawing, and it was one of those wonderfully gory Latino renditions. Nothing was spared: Christ's knees were bloody; blood was streaming down his face; the crown of thorns had been jammed tight into his skull; his fingers were clawed around the nub of the nail.

And it was arresting because I was still at the Mother Goose stage and not yet even into Grimm's fairy tales in which you have the odd scary old woman and, perhaps, the slavering wolf, but *nothing* like this. It's a very clear, visual memory, as clear as yesterday, burned like a daguerreotype into my brain, and I have no way of accounting for it. I asked my father about it, but I didn't even have the vocabulary to describe what I'd seen. I don't recall his answer.

My next memory is of my father telling me about Jesus being put to death — and I was very concerned about that, as they say in Washington. You know, "What on earth had gotten into them?" And he explained in a very gentle, fabulistic, Aesopian way that it had to be. He sought to assure me that Jesus had not been surprised by this, that this wasn't a bad card they had suddenly dealt off the bottom of the deck, and that He had come to earth specifically to die. I was about five, and we were driving in a car.

Then, before I knew what was happening, I began to be instructed in catechism. This was done privately in a kind of car pool approach. They found a nice, unblemished, suburban Catholic girl who also had the advantage of being very pretty. There were about five or six of us and she sort of walked us through the Baltimore Catechism which, on the whole, seemed very much less interesting than that card which I had seen in the gardener's shed.

By this time I was going to Mass with my dad and, always, the servants. My mother is Episcopalian, so she did not participate — it was just my dad, me, and the maids, all of whom were Cuban. I had a healthy resentment about this intrusion on my Sunday mornings and took no interest in it. But I was curious about some of the vocabulary. I remember, for instance, poring through one of those old missals with the

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onionskin paper and red and black ink and all that — the Mass was still in Latin then, with the English translation. I noticed one particular passage which attributed the adjective "terrible" to God, as in "for He is terrible." This made absolutely no sense, so I leaned over to my dad — I had the sense that I was on to something, that I had just caught a *major* typo. And so I learned at a very early age that "terrible" has more than one meaning.

Just in passing I should add that I became immensely resentful of Pope John XXIII not long after this. I was enrolled in altar boy training, the major part of which in those days was having those 138 lines drummed into you. One week after I had it all down pat, Vatican II changed everything, and I felt as though the whole thing had been done to annoy me. So I continued for a while to mumble under my breath, "*Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam.*"

What I remember mostly about First Holy Communion was the whiteness of the costumes and my special satisfaction in finally being allowed to wear long pants, for it would be many years before I was again allowed to wear long pants. There was a sense of something important going on. The movie cameras were out, the girls in their white dresses, the gold medallion with your name engraved on it. It was life's first ritual. There would be many rituals to follow, but that inflected all rituals with, I suppose, a subconscious religious content. However, *before* one got to First Communion, there was The First Confession.

I think that the first confession is essential to the whole thing. You take an eight-year-old kid and you tell him to go into a dark booth with a man dressed in black and tell the priest — what was it? — "the things that you haven't even told your mother," I think was how they put it. I remember distinctly being handed a mimeographed sheet by a nun. My memory is fuzzy, but I had gone from the pretty girl who taught me catechism past a brief gauntlet of nuns, who were not the sadistic concentration-camp matrons that they are popularly made out to be. Yet it was these nuns who caused a mimeographed sheet of sins to fall into my possession, given me for the examination of conscience prior to confession.

It's really rather an abstract concept, isn't it? Giving a child a mimeographed sheet — and it was crammed, it looked like a crib sheet. There was not much white space on it; there were something like forty or fifty choices, which was a lot for eight years old. So I took the sheet home. Now, there was a touch of Little Lord Fauntleroy about my childhood — I was the only child of devoted parents — and I found myself rather affronted by this sheet. "What do they want, anyway? What business is it of theirs that I've been stealing erasers from the local five and dime? Really, I'll keep this to myself, thank you very much."

I remember thinking quite a lot about this rather inconvenient step which had to be gone through in order to get that first wafer. I discussed it with my buddy from catechism class and we pored over it, and here life's first lesson in Catholic evasion was learned, which was: Go the path of least resistance. So we settled on "disobeying our parents." We made that our buzz-sin. Still, stepping into that confessional for the first time is an experience that every Catholic writer has explored with an understandably surreal appreciation of the sudden darkness that has been imposed on an otherwise gay period of life. It prefigures — doesn't it? — the transition from innocence to experience. And you find yourself *speaking* to this darkened screen, trying to remember things. It's sobering. It's really the most sobering thing I can imagine happening to an eight-year-old, in a ritualistic sense — you know, short of losing your mother or father. It's pretty grim stuff.

And then iconographically there is a marked difference. You go from the first confession, which occurs in this darkened sound chamber, the next day into a church that is brilliant with light, and you're wearing white. Everything is lambent, coruscating. You know the minds that devised all this weren't dumb, they were good showmen.

At a deeper level, there is a certain rationale to all that — although I didn't come to realize it until years later, when I read G. K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*. And I still think, if you could read only one book on what it means to be a Christian, that's the book. Anyway, in a chapter which he calls "The Ethics of Elfland," where he describes being brought up in an utterly agnostic household in which God did not figure, he tells how he learned Christianity without even knowing it at his nurse's knee when she read him the fairy tales. And when he came to God many years later and he looked back on what he had learned in the nursery, he realized that it was all the same. He calls it the "doctrine of negative prohibition," which is to say that the happiness depends always on *not* doing something. The prince will return to his homeland if he doesn't kiss the warthog; the girl will not turn into a newt if she gets home by a certain time. He discerns in this, with typical Chestertonian majestic reasoning, a continuity of theme that he later found in Christianity.

Getting back to the confessional, I was already a confirmed criminal at that age — I stole regularly from the local five and dime. But that really was about it. Much too early for impure thoughts. The disobeying of parents, certainly, and not saying your prayers — I was very guilty on that count. But, you see, I was really raised by Protestant women who had no interest in any of this and thought of it as rather vulgar, certainly unseemly. God, after all, *was* an Englishman, and this was merely an unfortunate by-product of having married a Catholic. For my part, I remember being astounded when I found out, at about age ten, that Episcopalians had only three sacraments. I thought, Well, poor things, how do they manage?

Finally, by grade four, I was sent to a Catholic school — a Montessori school, no less. So I went from an idyllic white schoolhouse with a trampoline out front to the wonderful world of Roman Catholicism à la Maria Montessori — oh, yoiks! The teachers there at Whitby all wore, in the Oxford or Cambridge manner, black robes. I suppose the idea was to inculcate in you a degree of formalistic respect for the institution. They were not a grim bunch, but it was the first time I was introduced, outside of church, to organized prayer. We began the

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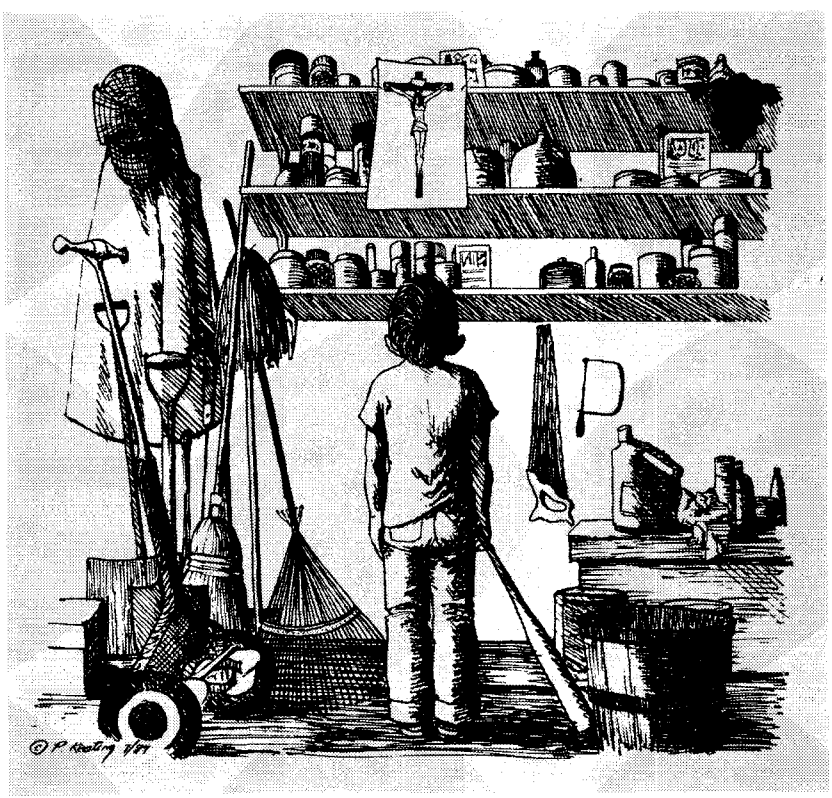
day with prayer in an assembly hall.

I remember very distinctly, one day in the middle of the afternoon, a teacher coming in and saying that they thought they had lost an astronaut, and we were all to come into the hallway immediately. They emptied all the classrooms into this long, shotgun hallway, maybe a hundred yards long and all cinderblock. So the effect was that of a sewer suddenly infested with penguins, by which I mean that we were all on our knees praying — for Gus Grissom, I think it was, the guy who blew it. It was not lost on me that there was something very concrete to the power of prayer, that more was more.

By now we all knew that, as Jesus had said, "Where there are three or more of you in a room together praying, I am with you." Catholicism is remarkably precise in its pronouncements. I want at some point to get to what effect it has on the imagination. But it may have something to do with the fact that you're given a number of conflicting propositions. One is that God is always with you — Proposition A — and Proposition B: God is with you if there are three or more of you in a room together. I thought, Wait a minute, I thought he was with me anyway. You started to hear the voice of Bill Cosby there somewhere.



But otherwise, it was very free form at Whitby. Grades three, four, and five were in the same homeroom, for instance, and you did clusters for instruction. It was very big on the "do whatever feels right" approach, which struck me as fine. I remember we had an English teacher who looked sort of like Luciano Pavarotti. He'd come in in this robe that looked impossibly small for him — I mean, it barely came down over his belt, so the overall effect was fairly ridiculous. And yet he was a dear, gentle character, kind of like a Friar Tuck. He taught creative writing, and he would come in and say, "Now, I want you all to put your heads down on your desks and relax . . . close your eyes, banish all your thoughts, and think of nothing. . . ." And somebody would go, "I can't think of nothing." But he'd go, "Shhhhhhhhh," and after about a minute or so he'd actually succeed in lulling you in a semihypnotic fashion into a state resembling sleep. And then all of a sudden he'd go, "Now, *create!*" He was the Werner Erhard of Montessori education.

Then I went off to a school in New York City called St. David's, which later became famous for having John-John Kennedy in kindergarten, whence Mrs. Kennedy removed him in a huff for some reason. Anyway, Catholic education then began in earnest. There was an honest-to-God chapel. There'd been no chapel at Whitby, it was all cinderblock — From His House to Bauhaus — and here there was a wood-paneled chapel with stained glass, pews, organ, the works, and I do mean the works. There were beatings — this was the beginning of corporal punishment — and very serious churching, right around the corner at St. Thomas More on East Eighty-ninth between Park and Madison. Now began the preparation for being a soldier of Christ: confirmation. Heavy stuff.

Once again, I was appalled when I learned that part of the ceremony would include being slapped in the face by Cardinal Spellman. The teachers went to great pains to say that this was a symbolic gesture, had nothing to do with how the cardinal felt about you personally, that it would in fact be a tap. But then the stories began to circulate that, you know, some kid's older brother, when he had been in Chicago, got a real *whack* across the face that left a five-fingered welt.

Then, at about grade six, it started to be important to get into the right prep school, so you'd get into the right college, so you'd get into the right life. My life was not very happy from about grade five to grade eight, because I would get back from a tough school, I would have an hour of piano practice, and then an hour of French from Genevieve, and then homework. Genevieve was my French governess, whose true calling obviously was to be a nun, and not of the nice variety. She was very Catholic and would give me punishments for rather minor infractions. Like once I walked back from receiving Communion and I guess I forgot myself — instead of folding my hands in the attitude of prayer, I just let them hang down by my sides. Oh, boy, did she make me regret that. She somehow managed to combine French grammar with extra religious instruction in a way that made me view the whole schmeer with an increasing desire to have nothing more to do with it. It became a grim kind of world. All of a sudden there was very little light. And at that point I sort of on the sly stopped going to confession.

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Now that was at home. At school, we had one teacher who would beat you with a ruler with your pants down, and one who did a sort of caning. We had a Latin teacher called Mr. Thompson, who was Scottish and smoked a pipe. He would whack you over the head with this pipe, and let me tell you, three ounces of briar, judiciously applied to the cranial weak spot, produced stars. I got belted a couple of times in the face with the back of the hand, but it was all pretty tame in comparison to what most other Catholic friends of mine were going through. Those who went off to the Christian Brothers were routinely beaten with leather straps. And the ones who were with nuns . . . One told me of a Sister Immaculata — it's always Sister Immaculata — who kept a box of uncooked rice by her desk. This particular school had concrete floors. She must have learned this at Buchenwald — she would sprinkle rice on the floor, and you had to roll up your pants and kneel on it for two hours. You ended up with bloody knees, and you ended up having to sort of surgically extract the grains of rice with a tweezer.

Now, I suppose this was convenient for the parents. I guess any loving parent would prefer not to beat their child and have someone else do it. There's a Chinese proverb that says, "Beat your child at least once a day — if you don't know why, the child does."

So that was St. David's. That was not a happy period. And then one weekend my dad and I went to look at prep schools. We looked at three, although there was a hidden agenda all along. We looked at Canterbury, which I kind of liked; we looked at Taft, which I loved — it looked like a miniature Yale or Harvard, out in the country with no evidence of religion — and then we went to Portsmouth Priory, run by the Benedictine monastery. I'd never seen a monk before, and it was a cold sort of cheerless place looking out on a bay that froze over in the winter, and I thought, my God, get me out of here. The monk who showed us around was a wonderfully gentle man who did much to set me at ease. A little over a year ago, that same monk married my wife and me. He's my closest spiritual adviser, but that gets rather ahead of the story.

My father didn't want to force anything down my throat, yet it was very clear that the deck was stacked. He said, "Well, what did you think?" I said, "God, I hate it." He said, "Well, what didn't you like about it?" I said, "Everything. Taft, great place." He said, "I tell you what makes sense whenever you're trying to make a tough decision — you make a list. On one side you put pros and on the other side you put cons. Shall we do that?" I said, "Sure." He said, "Okay, let's take Portsmouth. Now, on the pro side is the fact of Catholic education. . . ." I said, "What's so *pro* about that?" At that point I think he gave up for the moment.

I remember distinctly he and my mother having a real argument over dinner — it was just the three of us and my dad had basically informed her that I was going to Portsmouth. She was asserting her right to have a say in where I went, not as a religious matter but as a sort of turf battle. But she signed away those rights when she married my dad — all women who marry Catholics do. I mean, it's signed, sealed, and delivered; the church gets it in writing. But I remember a nasty argument because she knew clearly that I wanted nothing to do with Portsmouth, and I just wished they would stop, it was traumatic. But . . . off I went.

I was thirteen years old, and it was the most miserable time of my life. I cried myself to sleep every night for three months. It was the closest thing to a British public school experience that I think you could get on this side of the Atlantic — minus the Catholicism, of course. But it was a gray, cheerless, miserable September 13, 1966. My dad wept as he hugged me goodby — my mother wasn't speaking to him, because how could he do this to her? But he knew what he was doing.

I say that because Portsmouth is responsible for my having faith. Portsmouth itself I did not enjoy at the time I was there. It was very strict: thirty-six hours for Thanksgiving, no weekends, prayer every morning at seven, midday prayer, grace before meals — if you opened your mouth to put a Baby Ruth in, someone whapped a grace on you — vespers, evening prayer, Mass three times a week, and one of them was at six forty-five A.M. The bell would go at six fifteen, and in the winter it was dark and cold, and you would find yourself marching through snowdrifts up a hill with freezing toes to attend Mass. It was ridiculous. Did they really think that this was going to leave you with a love of God?

And then, of course, there were Christian doctrine courses — mandatory, nothing elective about them. One found oneself reading the Monarch Notes to the Old Testament: "All right now, which one was Amos?" But there were some characters among the monks. The headmaster was a man called Father Leo Van Winkle, who had worked with Edward Teller on the atom bomb as a young genius just out of Yale graduate school. The story went that some student from a previous generation had left photographs of Hiroshima taped to the front of his prayer carrel.

The one thing that is extraordinary about any *contained* Catholic institution, by which I suppose I simply mean boarding school, is the level of sadism. There was one Jewish kid at that school — what he was doing there I don't know — but he was the butt of every anti-Semitic joke, taunt, and raw cruelty, oven jokes, the works. Aloud. And I'm ashamed to say that I used to engage in that. We became friends, somehow — he somehow had the extraordinary grace to forgive. He was, incidentally, about the smartest kid there. And for some odd reason, part of the deal was that he had to attend Mass. He was not expected to take Communion or anything, but maybe they saw no sense in exempting him from what everyone else had to go through. I don't know.

And then there was a kid who had a ghastly case of acne — how he was made to suffer for that. One night they got him out of bed, smeared chocolate all over his face, and paraded him about with a crown as King Hershey. When you look at the parallel, it's something like the Passion — he was taunted and mocked. And what do you know, he was killed in a car crash a year after graduation. So somewhere there are thirty kids who

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probably don't feel very good about one episode in their youth, and perhaps there's something there.

A couple of the monks were sort of queer. There was no overt homosexuality, but there were some who took a perhaps indecent interest in gym, and one who was sort of into spanking boys for not very serious provocations. And then there was a lay Latin professor, an old, florid-faced, white-haired English guy, rather decent really, called Cecil J. Acheson. But he had certain lapses. We were translating the *Aeneid*, and he had given us a word the class before. He said, "When you get to the fifth line of this translation, be alert to the word" — and I remember it very well — "*denique*. It's not a word you'll find in the dictionary. It means 'in a nutshell.' It's rather an interesting word." Well, this class he called on a kid to translate the first five lines and the kid, sure enough, forgot *denique*. Acheson went absolutely vermillion. And his glasses would fog up — this sounds like a movie but he had those owl, Coke-bottle glasses — and he turned to the kid in a voice seething with hatred and he said, "I don't understand why they don't send more of your kind to Vietnam. You're so expendable. Now let's go to Mass. God loves you; I don't."

So these were some of the things that happened at Portsmouth. I have obviously highlighted the grim. The caliber of the education was extraordinary. These monks may have been dotty, some of them, but they were all really authentic geniuses. In a class of sixty, in my senior year, ten of us were accepted at Harvard, and seven or eight at Yale, and then a hefty level of acceptances at Columbia, Dartmouth, Williams, Stanford. So they did their job.

That, of course, was the last time I saw the inside of a church for quite some time. I then shipped out on the merchant marine as a deck boy on a Norwegian freighter and worked my way around the world. And that was a very different experience. I mean, there were no Saturdays, there were no Sundays, and there were certainly no churches. There were Indian temples and Buddhist temples, but there were also the Mosquito Bar, the LeGaspi Rosegarden, rather more of that. I fell into probably what everyone does, which is the lapsed moment, and that endured through the summer of my sophomore year in 1972.

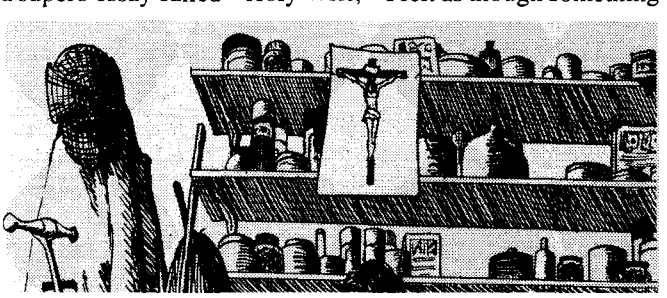
At that time an incident happened which I have to think maybe was put there. I was out drinking with some friends at a hotel in British Columbia where I was visiting my grandmother. I went into the men's room to wash my hands and have a pee. As I was washing my hands, I became aware of someone there who was neither having a pee nor washing his hands. I had taken self-defense, so I went into yellow alert. He said something innocuous, and I turned and saw that he was a pudding of a man with nothing harmful in his aspect. He was slightly flabby, very pale but kempt. But he looked very sad, so I asked him if there was something wrong. He said, "Well, up until yesterday I was a Benedictine monk, and I've left the Order. And I don't really know where to go." And I had no advice.

A few days later I found myself in the basement of a house where I had set up a temporary desk. At this point I had started dabbling in some creative writing and so I thought to write a short story about the incident. Halfway into the short story I found myself weeping — weeping with prodigality. I thought, I have betrayed these good men. The word is overused, but this was an *epiphany*, a sudden and unanticipated revelation of something — namely that these were truly godly men who, for all their dottiness, were holy. I ended the story, which was a rather crude attempt at fiction, with the monk walking out of the men's room — and he hears a cock crowing. Genius, huh?

So I was brought back to the church by a chance encounter with a defrocked monk in a men's room in the Hotel Vancouver, and I've been back ever since. I remember explaining to my dad a year after returning from the merchant marine that I no longer went to church. He got very quiet, then he said, "You've got to, you've got to." And I said, "Well, look, I'll do it for you. I'll sit and listen to the music, but it ain't gonna reach me." But he was willing to settle for that. Of course, I didn't. Later on, I used to do all sorts of terrible things, like drop acid on Good Friday — not specifically because it was Good Friday, it just happened to be Good Friday. This was after I had gone back to the church, but it was still a rather unstructured period. That sort of thing wasn't covered on the mimeographed sheets the nuns had given me when I was eight. But it was really a rather exuberant re-entry.

The church and I never did differ on matters of doctrine. It had nothing at all to do with that. It was just unthinking revolution, although to call it revolution is to put too sophisticated a construction on it. If you've been under the supervision of a French governess and then thirty Benedictine monks, and then you are let free, and suddenly no one's observing you — I'm willing to bet that this happened to 95 percent of the people I went to Portsmouth with — it's, you know, Thank God. It's *Ite, missa est:* thank God it's over.

At that point, you see, I hadn't come to Chesterton. Chesterton had a lot to do with it. My dad and I once went down to Taxco, Mexico, for the purpose of reading aloud to each other G. K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*. And it was fabulous, in almost literally that way. It explains everything, and it was so beautifully written that reading it aloud makes it almost your own. It was kind of a crash course in the poetry of faith, which I had never quite grasped through the formal education. Formal education was linear, doctrinal, austere. They never sought to try to relate, say, Shakespeare to it, or Rimbaud. I hadn't discovered the wonderful, poetical qualities of Catholicism, so that when I chanced onto the line written by H. L. Mencken in a superb essay called "Holy Writ," I felt as though something



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very important had been illumined. And I was very grateful to such a sturdy and robust atheist as Mencken for having come up with the sentence: "The Latin church, which I find myself admiring more and more despite its frequent, astounding imbecilities, has always kept clearly before it the fact that religion is not a syllogism but a poem."

All of a sudden it all began to fall into place, that it wasn't just a lawyer's brief on how to make it all the way, but an interpretation of how it had all come about. I believe in Darwin *and* Genesis. I find nothing contradictory in the theory of evolution and Christianity. Whittaker Chambers writes in *Witness* that what brought *him* to belief in God was sitting in the kitchen one night feeding his three-year-old daughter. He found himself observing her ear, this perfect, delicate little ear, and he decided this was not an accident, not a random accretion of molecules — it was designed.

It's very hard to say what goes into writing, whether it be religion or anything else, for that matter. You know, someone once complimented Winston Churchill on a speech he had just made and said, "Winnie, how long did it take you to write that?" Churchill said, "Six hours . . . plus seventy years." A writer's capital is his life. But I'll tell you something very concrete. I'm a big fan of St. Thomas More, and I keep next to the screen of my word processor a postcard of the Holbein from the Frick Museum, the famous portrait of Thomas More. And I keep it there for a reason: He keeps me straight. It's actually happened that when, in the course of doing a magazine piece or whatever, I'm tempted to fudge a quote — if I think, Well, this quote doesn't do exactly what I want it to do, so I'll just fix it up — then I look at More and I unfudge it. Now I really should have A. J. Liebling or E. B. White there, but I refer this to a higher authority perhaps than another journalistic buddy of mine might do.

Right now I'm embarked upon a very distinctly Catholic project. I'm writing a play on the life of Edmund Campion, the Jesuit martyr under Elizabeth I, whose life was illuminated to me by Evelyn Waugh's book on Campion. And I'm doing it with James MacGuire, a friend of mine from Portsmouth. After watching *Brideshead Revisited*, he had the idea to do a saga of the recusants, a term from the sixteenth century used to describe one who refused to attend the Anglican services.

I suppose I have a fairly Manichean imagination, and I tend to divide things into good and evil. I believe in genuine evil. Watching *The Exorcist* was for me a truly horrifying experience. As someone else might put it, I *believe* in that shit. I don't believe in ghosts, but I do believe in miracles.

There's a line in *Orthodoxy*, which I shall now render clumsily, and it's Chesterton's answer to the scientific denunciation of the existence of God. He says he has absolutely nothing against skeptics except — and here's the very Chestertonian trademark — they're not skeptical enough. He says, "It seems to me fine to say that you cannot believe in God because you can't see him with your senses; but how is it that you can believe in a dandelion? What is it that is so rational, obvious, logical about a dandelion or a butterfly?" He does that rather well.

Here's a true story told to me by a very good friend of Graham Greene, concerning Greene and Padre Pio. Padre Pio, who died not long ago, was an Italian priest who received the stigmata early on, and he became as such almost an embarrassment to the church. You know, the church is very wary of miracles. The Catholic church has taken pains to keep the Shroud of Turin quiet. They take it out every twenty-five or thirty years, but that's about it.

But here they had a guy with the stigmata, and the crowds were starting to come. His hands would bleed at the moment of the elevation of the host; otherwise, he wore gloves. So they sent him to a very remote parish in Italy that was hard to get to — precisely because they didn't want headlines saying, you know, THE AMAZING BLEEDING PRIEST. They wanted to secrete him. And there are a number of miracles associated with his life, which are the subject of a fairly fascinating book, recently written.

Anyway, Graham Greene, who is a rather complicated Catholic — I have no window to look into another man's soul, but he's a pretty skeptical dude — heard about Padre Pio, and he went to visit. He located the village on a Sunday. Everyone was packed into Mass, and he got into the back of the church. At the moment of the elevation, sure enough, Padre Pio began bleeding. Greene was horrified by it and he fled, he had to get out of there. He went to the edge of town and had a drink. He was sitting there with a bottle, getting ready to leave, when he saw a young priest running in the street. The priest ran right up to him and said, "I have a message from Padre Pio. The message is this: Be at peace. God does not ask anything from us that we cannot give Him." And he left.

That's a true story. I'm not sure if Greene has ever told it — he may possibly still be freaked out. But it was told me by someone very close to him, who is also a Catholic. Interesting.

SCREEN

SATIRED OUT

'FULL METAL,' 'TAMPOPO,' ET AL.

Sure, *Full Metal Jacket* has some good moments, but it is too abstract, uneven, and fractured to work as compelling drama. It has some of the genuine strengths of director Stanley Kubrick, but all of his weaknesses as well.

For example, Kubrick has a fetish for abstract dramatic structure. In *2001* (1968), this meant an abrupt four-part division of the action. There was no clearly explained narrative link between the appearance among apemen of a mysterious monolith in the first part, the exploration of the moon by contemporary astronauts in the second part, a space voyage to

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Jupiter in the third, and the strange para-physical passage, "Jupiter and Beyond," in the fourth. In *Full Metal Jacket* Kubrick splits his film in two, initially covering harrowing basic training for Marine recruits and moving into Vietnam later. But here he forgets to provide a link, even mystery or suspense, to pull us from one part to the other.

Even character continuity is minimal. Kubrick ends his basic training segment with the explosive resolution of his story of two key Marines, a drill sergeant who is a virtuoso of infantilizing sadism (played by Lee Ermey, an actual former basic training instructor) and a fat, dumb recruit whom Ermey nicknames "Gomer Pyle." Of the recruits in the first part, only "Joker" (Matthew Modine) and a minor character, "Cowboy," are seen fighting in Vietnam. Although a core of recognizable soldiers is drawn together around them in the Tet retaking of Hue by the Marines in the second half, there is no *Platoon*-like set of characters unifying the whole film.

Of course, Kubrick is not interested in character, or continuity, but idea. This is inconvenient in a narrative medium like film, although Kubrick at times has gotten the better of the problem. Here, for example, in the basic training segments, his indifference to the insides of character fits the content: the precise goal of Marine drills is to eliminate character, to refashion identity down to the nicknames imposed on the recruits. Despite the familiarity of such drill scenes, Kubrick even gets some dramatic momentum from the crude, often blasphemous verbal energy of Ermey's instructor, Sergeant Hartman (that, too, an ironically symbolic name). As we all now know, any Marine who speaks loudly and with enough display of absolute conviction can compel broad audience attention.

But Kubrick doesn't have enough ammunition to sustain the whole film with such reductive strategies. As noted, he drops the sergeant flat. Worse, he has little to put in Ermey's place. No idea ties together the first and second half of *Full Metal Jacket* — except, maybe, the novel notion of man's inhumanity to man. Some scenes in Hue give the cliché sporadic power, but, except for the concluding encounter with a sniper, they lack dramatic shape. Well, yes, there is something of a bitter comment on machismo linking the first half and the Hue sections; but typically one doesn't feel this as much as one sees Kubrick's intent.

Worst of all, as in *A Clockwork Orange* (1975), Kubrick's camera too frequently delights in gory images to suggest the kind of steady anti-war stance of his early classic *Paths of Glory* (1957). Kubrick's moral ambivalence is summed up by his treatment of "Joker." Modine wears both a peace symbol and a helmet inscribed with the phrase "Born to Kill." Outside Hue a Marine colonel demands to know what these conflicting symbols mean. Modine explains by referring to "the Jungian duality of man." Some critics have earned their stars by claiming that "Joker" combines the good and evil sergeants in *Platoon* in one character. In truth, such arithmetic makes for nullity. Without emotional depth to either half of "Joker," two times zero remains, resolutely, zero.

More recently, Kubrick has salvaged his growing lack of interest in drama, character, and morality with comic depictions of superhuman machines; but here, no Strangelovian "Doomsday Device" and no HAL computer come to his rescue. As Pauline Kael has remarked, it's apt that a director with such a mechanical vision of humanity created his best character in HAL, whose swan-song when disconnected ("Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer true") is the most pathetic moment in any Kubrick film. *Full Metal Jacket* lacks such inspired wit, substituting heavy-handed satire on American soldiers in Vietnam: the Marine colonel who looks askance at "Joker's" mildly iconoclastic display of symbols tells him not only to "get on the team," but also, "Inside every gook, there's an American struggling to get out." We will not laugh war away with such an absurd lampoon. It speaks only to the converted. *Platoon* embarrassed Ramboism; *Full Metal Jacket* at its worst embarrasses anyone interested in challenging Ramboism. Compare *Platoon*'s handling of battlefield atrocities by a desperately troubled, resentful Southerner (Kevin Dillon) and Kubrick's cartoon of a one-dimensional helicopter gunner in *Full Metal Jacket*.

Some critics have said Kubrick's problem is his distance from America. He has lived for over two decades in London, in whose abandoned East End slums Hue was recreated for the film. But Kubrick's distance is not measurable in oceans so much as emotions. In his eighteenth-century costume drama, *Barry Lyndon* (1978), his attitude toward character was no different from in *Full Metal Jacket*; there the puppets were just more gorgeously costumed. Such universal misanthropy is not just repulsive; it is tedious. When Kubrick so empties the personalities of his characters that they seem to be no less determined than robots, he commits the imitative fallacy; mimicking their lifelessness, he achieves it in his films. True or not, we enjoy the illusion of free will, and, as Dr. Johnson would say, "There's an end on it."

To such authority, Kubrick might listen. He probably considers himself a satirist in the grand tradition of the eighteenth century, borrowing from Thackeray's nostalgic vision of that time, recalling Swift in his anger. But Augustan satire was as secure in moral norms and aesthetic means as it was harsh in its indictment of society. At present, Kubrick has half its power.

Revenge of the Nerds, II. . . . Jaws III (The Revenge) . . . . Beverly Hills Cops II . . . . Superman IV. . . . Pardon my violation of critical principles, but do I really have to see these films (again, in effect) to tell you they are worthless? One doesn't have to go to Tierra del Fuego to know the trip there may be unpleasant. Summer at least has brought some foreign films which provide alternatives.

Tampopo has become a mini-hit, but it will leave you feeling undernourished. Billed as "the first Samurai Noodle Western," it concerns the widowed owner of a restaurant (Naboko Miyamato) who needs help perfecting her fare from a truck driver (Tsutumo Yamazaki) who looks like a Japanese Gregory Peck. Despite a strong beginning, the film founders on too much mock-heroic and writer/director Juzo Itami's

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tendency to slip away from the main plot. Some of the asides are hilarious, and a running gag involving a gangster and his moll provides a superb scene of mock-erotic fun. But the net effect of all the tangents is to flatten interest in the main story. The noodles are finally all properly cooked, but they have no place to go.

Ping Pong has more substance but also disappoints. A young Anglo-Chinese lawyer (Lucy Sheen) in London's Chinatown must execute an old businessman's will that requires his family to come to terms with their ethnic heritage. Sheen is spunky, and her struggle to get the relatives to accept "hyphenation" is apropos; a Chinese-American version of the same subject occasioned last year's *The Great Wall*. But the reasons for the family's initial resistance and final submission seem inscrutable. While the acting and subject are appealing, the film just doesn't grow on you.

Rita, Sue, and Bob Too is audacious, vulgar, equally offensive and delightful. Language and morals are both loose in this English blend of bedroom farce and coming-of-age. Its novelty is point of view: the title's *ménage à trois* is seen from a feminine perspective. Rita (played by an elfin-faced Celt, Siobhan Finneran) and Sue (Michelle Holmes) are late teens and lower class; they fall for the bawdy charms of middle-class Bob (George Costigan), who has been repelled by his frigid wife. Their ultimate lesson is to beware smooth-talking males, both suburbanites and lyrical Pakistanis, whose subculture is treated in an aside. The acting and feisty screenplay (by Andrea Dunbar) make the girls' exuberance and suffering compelling; the dark underside is the squalor of lower-class British life.

More standard English *film noir* comes from the spy thriller, *The Whistle Blower*, so elegant in texture that I kept waiting for George Smiley to show up. *The Whistle Blower* puts stars Michael Caine, John Gielgud, and Nigel Havers (the lordly hurdler of *Chariots of Fire*) through a maze of moral ambiguities worthy of Le Carré. Such fare is traditional but classic.

TOM O'BRIEN

BOOKS

The past & present of futurism

THE FUTURIST MOVEMENT
AVANT-GARDE, AVANT GUERRE, AND THE LANGUAGE OF RUPTURE
Marjorie Perloff
University of Chicago, $24.95, 288 pp.

Timothy Materer

Marjorie Perloff's *The Futurist Movement* is the kind of scholarly book that should be bought in bookstores as well as checked out of libraries. This handsome, colorful book comes with more than seventy illustrations and with enthusiastic blurbs from avant-garde artists like John Ashbery and John Cage, as well as many distinguished academics. A vivid account of the pre-World War I period of Futurist art, it shows us how the art of our time developed.

To read the obituaries of Andy Warhol is too see how badly we need the kind of perspective on contemporary art that a study of the Futurist movement gives us. Without denying Warhol's talents, one may be surprised to see him praised (as *Newsweek* did) as *the* artist who saw that modern culture consisted of mass-produced images (from Campbell's soup cans to photographs of an assassination). Tracing such a concept back to the period before 1914 reveals that there is a long tradition even for the avant-garde.

Perloff thinks that the seminal importance of Futurism has not been recognized because the Italian Futurists were later associated with Fascism, and so their innovations in collage, manifesto, sound poetry, typography, and poetic forms have been neglected by later critics who disliked the tone or politics of their declarations.

A still more important reason for this neglect is that prior to this book there has been no critic ambitious enough to synthesize the materials in English, Italian, French, and Russian in order to assess Futurism's influence. The nationalist barriers of language and politics had to be overcome to assess a moment in history when a genuine international community of art was a reality. Marinetti published his 1909 Futurist Manifesto not in Italy but in the Paris *Figaro*, and conversely Apollinaire's *L'Antitradition futuriste* (1913), with its poster-like arrangement of typography and its call for the suppression of "poetic grief . . . syntax, punctuation, lines and verses, houses, boredom," was published, not in Paris, but in Milan in a bilingual edition.

Perloff finds in Futurism some of the most crucial developments in modern art and literature, such as the breakdown of the prose/poetry distinction and questioning the power of art to represent reality. In an age of mechanical inventions that were transforming human experience — the automobile and airplane, typewriter and telegraph — both the space of the canvas and of the book-page were reconceived. Art that adhered to classical genres — portraits, landscapes, the novel, lyric poetry — was thrown over for an art that questioned the power of paint or words to represent the world.

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The ordinary objects (scraps of newspapers, tobacco pipes, nails) glued to Futurist canvases or incorporated into sculptures proclaimed the artificiality and not the realism of art. Collage art thus became one of the prime modernist achievements.

The key concept of "The Invention of Collage" (Chapter II) is related to the verbal art of the Futurist Manifestos and to the experiments of major poets like Ezra Pound. The art of collage was appropriate to an age of bewildering juxtapositions during the transition from hand-labor and horse-drawn transportation to the world of the machine, as well as to the ambiguity of an age of radically changing values. Perloff relates visual *collage* to Marinetti's famous performances of his manifestos and "sound-poems," when he would reproduce the sounds of siege guns and airplanes as "performance art." A chapter on the "Manifesto as an Art Form" explores a genre of art in which the categories of the literary and the theoretical breakdown in a mode characterized by improvisation and theatricality.

Chapters on Ezra Pound's prewar writings and the Russian Futurist book focus on the "rupture" of literary categories. Meaning in this tradition is ambiguous because clear and direct statements are evaded. To insist on meaning is to miss the significance. Attention is given to the surface of the work, the play of the words and phrases, rather than to thematic or symbolic meaning. This is what so many artists from Oscar Wilde on have meant by saying that their works are mere surface and what Warhol meant when he told those who want to "understand" him: "just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it."

The final chapter shows us how the Futurist revolution lives on in the present. One of the major images in Futurist art is the Eiffel Tower, which is the focus of Perloff's last chapter. The Tower is to Paris what the Empire State Building is to New York — originally a great technical achievement, it became a symbol for the city itself, and finally an endlessly reproduced, cliché'd image. The challenge is to get beyond the layers of associations and "meanings" it has acquired to see it afresh — a problem Andy Warhol addressed when he used a stationary camera to film the skyscraper for eight hours. In the case of the Eiffel Tower, turn-of-the century aesthetes repudiated it as a "monstrous" erection among the city's churches and museums and as the folly of an "ironmonger." But the Futurists welcomed it as the sign, ambiguous, banal, but somehow magnificent, of the modern age.

The original Futurists welcomed the technological age unreservedly, which is scarcely possible now. To measure the changes that have overtaken us, Perloff compares Blaise Cendrars's poetic treatment of the Tower to Roland Barthes's post-modern version. Barthes is as moved by the monument as Cendrars, but far more ambiguous about the technology that created it: "even as Barthes echoes Cendrars's themes, he ionizes and problematizes them. If . . . the ethos of *avant guerre* has its counterpart in the contemporary dissolution of the boundaries between art and science, between literature and theory, between the separate genres and media, ours is what we might call a disillusioned or cool Futurism." Perloff explores this disillusion by analyzing the "anti-monuments" of Robert Smithson. His "Great Pipes Monument" — lengths of pipes crossing an industrial wasteland — is heavily ironic but also open to a new sense of aesthetic form (and one might say much the same about some of Warhol's works).

Readers with diverse interests in national literatures and artistic genres will enjoy this book. Perloff's critical terminology is sophisticated but clearly grounded in a wealth of specific and lively details; and every page seems to bring up some new facet of a work or author or an unexpected comparison. Futurism lasted for only a moment of prewar experiment and enthusiasm, but *The Futurist Movement* expands that moment and shows how it permeates our own.

LOVERS & 'DESAPARECIDOS'

OF LOVE AND SHADOWS
Isabel Allende
Translated by Margaret Sayers Peden
Knopf, $17.95, 247 pp.

Sonia Gernes

"The ones they take away never come back," the peasant woman says, telling Irene Beltrán of her missing daughter, and it is these missing ones, the political victims, the *desaparecidos* of a Latin American dictatorship, that form the underlying link in Isabel Allende's tale of lovers who come together in a dangerous and vertiginous search for the truth of these vanishings.

Allende, niece of the slain Chilean president Salvador Allende, never names the country of her fiction, but her novel, based on the actual discovery of a cache of bodies in an abandoned mine, is clearly about her native land: a general in dark glasses rules following a military coup; the stadium of the capital city is used as a political prison; and bodies bearing the marks of torture are stacked up in the city morgue.

These horrors come later in the novel however. It begins slowly, introducing us first to the genteel, upper-class world of Irene, a fiery-haired journalist whose maverick social habits are a cause of distress to her aristocratic mother, Beatriz Beltrán. In the slightly comic, slightly surreal mode that characterizes much of the early novel, Allende describes the Will of God Manor, a home for the wealthy, aged, and senile that Beatriz unwillingly maintains in the lower floor

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of her mansion to support herself following her husband's desertion. Allende uses these old people to telegraph immediately Irene's essential character: though flashy and headstrong, she "never missed an opportunity to visit the guests," having "discovered a language that overcame their deafness and faulty memories."

By contrast, the world of Francisco Leal is shabby but intellectually alive. The son of Spanish revolutionary émigrés, Francisco is a psychologist who turns to photography to make a living after the military coup makes practicing his profession impossible. His current job at a women's magazine is one of "compulsory illusion" mitigated by a quite different reality: "The same day that he photographed exquisite dresses of muslin and lace, in his brother Jose's barrio he treated the little girl who had been raped by her father, then carried the latest list of victims to the airport, where, after reciting the password, he delivered it to a messenger he had never seen before."

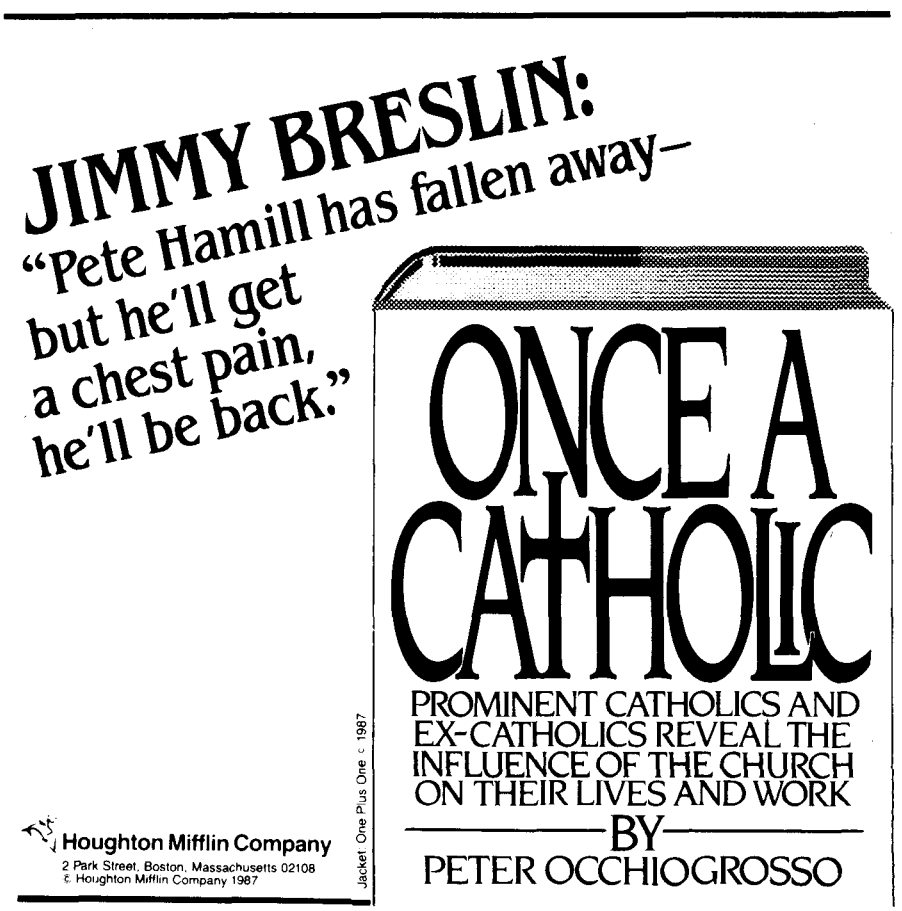
Shabbier even than the Leal home is the dirt-floored cottage of Digna Ranquileo, the peasant woman whose daughter Evangelina is attracting pious crowds with her daily noonday "attacks." "Cure my carbuncles, *santita,*" they pray in a scene reminiscent of Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. "God save you, Evangelina, full of grace. Heal my poor husband's hemorrhoids."

Into this scene ride journalist Irene and photographer Francisco, sent by their magazine to cover the story. The miracle begins precisely at noon, and even the arrival of an army truck does not break the mood of comic fantasy for long. When the lieutenant approaches Evangelina, she knocks him to the ground: "The person who effortlessly seized Lieutenant Ramiriz's tunic, lifted him into the air, and carried him out of the house, shaking him like a mop, was a gentle fifteen-year-old girl with fragile bones, who not long before had been serving cool water with toasted flour and honey beneath the grape arbor."

Retribution is swift, however. When Irene and Francisco return to the Ranquileo home, they discover that in the night Evangelina has been dragged, barefoot and screaming, into an army truck, and that her brother, a young soldier in Lieutenant Ramiriz's platoon, is also missing. This is the book's turning point. The comic disappears, and for the rest of the tale the reader is drawn into the accelerating pitch of a love affair that is inextricably bound up with a commitment to find out the truth about the missing Ranquileos, whatever the dangers. The search leads them through the morgue, the police station, a mountain hideout, and the ultimate horror of an abandoned mine. This is the trail of the *desaparecidos*.

In her second novel, Allende's storytelling skills are considerable. Her cast of characters is large, ranging from Professor Leal, the aging socialist with a kitchen printing press, to Pradiolo Ranquileo, the young soldier tormented with lust for his foster sister, to the cardinal in his episcopal mansion. Yet each is distinct, unique, a personage who sticks in the mind. Even more skillful is her use of a constantly switching point of view as a means of demonstrating how a military coup could take place and be accepted in a country with a long history of democracy. Beatriz Beltrán negates the unpleasant aspects of the military regime by ignoring them, by absorbing herself in diets and face cream. Pradiolo Ranquileo has been told that the coup saved the nation from Soviet tyranny: "The enemy must truly have been dangerous and skillful, because to that day no one had ever learned of their bloodthirsty plans except the commanders of the armed forces, who were always vigilant on behalf of the nation's interest." Even the villainous Lieutenant Ramiriz is given his say: "They had also trained him to wage war against common criminals, to pursue them mercilessly, hunt them down like dogs, so that decent men, women, and children could walk the streets with a light heart. That was his mission."

In *Of Love and Shadows*, Isabel Allende is occasionally heavy-handed, driving home points that have already been made, and summarizing where the reader wishes she had dramatized, but


JIMMY BRESLIN:
"Pete Hamill has fallen away—but he'll get a chest pain, he'll be back."
ONCE A CATHOLIC
PROMINENT CATHOLICS AND EX-CATHOLICS REVEAL THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH ON THEIR LIVES AND WORK
BY
PETER OCCHIOGROSSO
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these are minor flaws in a novel that takes the risks of combining love story, adventure story, comic episode, and mortally serious political event. Allende has struck her target with little margin of error. This is one of the most memorable novels this reviewer has read in recent years.

GETTING DEPERSONAL

THEATERS OF THE MIND
ILLUSION AND TRUTH ON THE PSYCHOANALYTIC STAGE

Joyce McDougall
Basic Books, $22.95, 301 pp.

Michael Eigen

In trying to make sense of her psychoanalytic practice, Joyce McDougall has found it necessary to distinguish five main kinds of personality problems with their typical psychodynamics. She begins the book by likening psychic life to a kind of theater, and calls attention to the varied forms the I can take in the course of its history. Thus while she distinguishes five patterns of clinical psychodynamics, she invites us to realize how we all share these five forms of I.

Her broadest distinction is between the Theater of the Forbidden and the Theater of the Impossible. The former refers to neurotic problems which center on oedipal problems and forbidden libidinal longings. The latter refers to impossible narcissistic desires, such as our longing for fusion with the other or perfect control of the other and life's events. In the most extreme instances, our impossible wishes may result in psychosis. But we may find ways to ward off psychosis by more circumscribed forms of "madness" in daily life.

In addition to neurosis and psychosis, there are severe character and addictive disorders, psychosomatic disorders, and perversions (neosexualities). With regard to the first of these, McDougall is particularly interested in how we use others as drugs. She uses examples from her clinical practice to show how the patient exploits others in order to maintain a sense of self by warding off the pain of limits, sexuality, death, fusional anxieties and fragmentation. In such instances, something has gone wrong with what D. W. Winnicott called the transitional area of experience, the area of play between fantasy and reality. Instead of the ability to create cultural illusions that are life-giving to all, the individual is stuck using others to sustain megalomaniac scripts which fail to make the most of the hard facts of life. McDougall calls this area the Transitional Theater. Although she does not explicitly say it, she is investigating the link between megalomania and clinging, a crucial aspect of our psychology.

McDougall finds it helpful to view so-called perverse sexuality as a kind of addictive use of others, a creation of a neosexual erotic theater. The fetish, the partner, or part-object are used to combat oedipal and narcissistic castration anxieties, but also attempt to provide some maternal object to combat the terror of inner death and sense of wholesale destructiveness. Here the forbidden and the impossible are played out in the sexual arena. The subject creates sexual alternatives which keep him alive and viable, often at great expense.

McDougall performs a service to American readers by providing a good discussion of French and Canadian work with psychosomatic illness. A psychosomatic "type" has arisen characterized by an "operational" mode of functioning and an inability to sustain fantasy or a sense of affective meaning. The person relates to himself and others in a machine-like way, treating himself and others as physical objects or instruments shorn of rich affect, imagery, and meaning. Apparently little psychic elaboration of mental pain has evolved and a biological "solution" to psychological problems ensues. McDougall shows how it is necessary to try to stimulate richer mental functioning in such patients. It is not simply a matter of the mind evading stress, although this is true. But the more telling problem is that the mind as such has, in important ways, failed to develop, or has been evacuated.

McDougall sees a link between psychosomatic and neosexual problem areas. In both instances it appears that the

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TIMOTHY MATERER *is chair of the English department at the University of Missouri-Columbia, presently on leave with a Guggenheim fellowship to edit the letters of Ezra Pound.*

SONIA GERNES *is the author of a novel,* The Way to St. Ives *(Scribner).*

MICHAEL EIGEN *is a psychologist and psychoanalyst practicing in New York City.*

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mother could not allow the development of independent sexual functioning on the part of the child. For example, the mother substituted herself or her body for the child's attempts at thumb sucking or masturbatory activity. More generally, the child was treated as her instrument, life-support machine, or drug and was deprived of the unfolding of his own existence. Child abuse here is akin to substance abuse in a profound sense, and both are linked with the inability to perceive self and others in a richly human way.

It is easy to see why it has been said that McDougall has no enemies in Paris, where she practices — no mean feat in that city where strife between psychoanalytic sects is the rule. Her work is balanced, orderly, sensitive, and probing. It fits well with and amplifies her earlier book, *Plea for a Measure of Abnormality* (New York: International Universities Press, 1980). Both were originally published in French and she did the English translations. There is no space now for my critique of her picture of the birth of self in infancy. But this is secondary to my recommenation to read her work. I believe her work easily demonstrates the value of good psychoanalysis in contemporary terms. Whatever its flaws and limitations, I do not know of any discipline which offers such richly detailed care in the problems of human intimacy. McDougall's work proves that the quality of psychoanalytic work depends on the sensibility of the practitioner, at the same time that the latter needs to be nourished by the field at large.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 434)

such intellectual arrogance. After all, Christianity has come from the East, the oldest Rites in the church are from the East, and yet we here in the West discriminate by voluntary ignorance. This ignorance is propagated from generation unto generation. My children are now attending Catholic schools and the pattern has not changed.

Outside of the token mention of married priests in the Eastern Rites, there is absolutely no effort to educate our young people of the diversity of the church. And yet, we reach out to the Orthodox and the Protestants in gestures of reconciliation. We will never attain such a goal until we see our church for what it is, a pluralistic institution. Then we will be able to attract the Orthodox and Protestants to more meaningful dialogue. Ignorance is not bliss, it is a disaster.

LARISSA M. FONTANA

Another Allen fan

Avon, Mass.

To the Editors: I appreciated Marian Burkhart's defense of Woody Allen, "Beauty in a World of Schlock" [May 8], although I fear that both she and Allen's detractors give his films a spiritual significance beyond what they can sustain. . . .

One detail, however — what is this Loeb Memorial Library at Columbia? Surely Burkhart means Low Library, which was once the college library but for years now has been an administration building.

DANIEL LAMOUREUX

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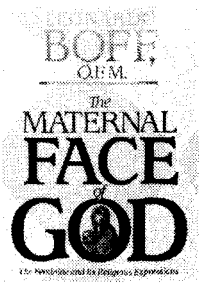

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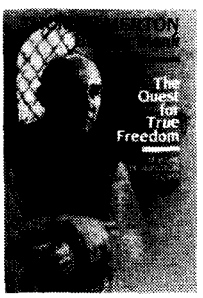

THOMAS MERTON, BROTHER MONK
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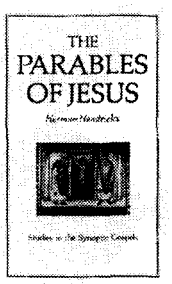

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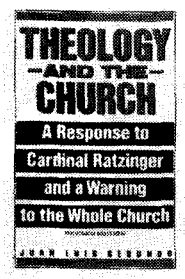

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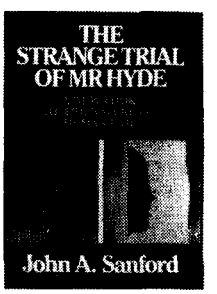

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